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To

My Wife

Lakshmibai

PREFACE

THE object of this book is to present a comprehensive and dispassionate picture of the rise and termination of British rule in India through a study of the regimes of fifteen out of the thirty-three British Governors-General and Viceroys that administered this country. These men have been selected essentially because their terms of office have become noteworthy for momentous happenings. A study of their administrations will help us to gain a vivid understanding of the ideas and ideals that animated the British rulers of this country.

Like most of their European rivals, the English first came to this country to take a share in its abounding riches through trade. India's domestic distractions and the necessity of supplanting their competitors forced them to wield the sword with the same determination as that shown by them in capturing the country's commerce. Besides the imbecility of the Indian governments, the enormous resources of the East India Company helped them to attain continental sovereignty eventually.

For more than a century after the grant of the trading charter to the Company by Queen Elizabeth in 1600, the type of Englishman that came to India was not a model of courtesy, moderation or good behaviour. Clive, who has carved out a place for himself in history by his easy victories over his pusillanimous adversaries, furnishes an outstanding example of such men Starting his career as a petty clerk, he returned to his homeland as the wealthiest subject of his sovereign!

In Warren Hastings, we are, however, brought face to face with a gentleman who was also a statesman. He felt a deep veneration for the antiquity and the grandeur of the Indian civilization and, gathering around him a brilliant band of Oriental scholars, strove hard to revive the glorious heritage of this land. Men like Curzon, who came long after him, followed in his footsteps and adopted measures to preserve and to bring to the attention of the world the country's priceless cultural treasures.

Unfortunately, there were not many Englishmen who shared Warren Hastings' sagacity and statesmanship. The conquest of the country *promoted in them* a feeling that British rule in India would endure till the end of time. It was this illusion which prompted them to adopt wrong policies that led to an estrangement between them and the Indian people. The revolt of 1857 was an inevitable consequence of such antagonism.

Except a small number of their countrymen, most of the Englishmen failed to realise till the actual deliverance of the country that freedom was implicit in the very nature of their rule. For the first time after many centuries, the entire country was brought within the frame of a single government. The long distances that had separated the Indian people from coming together more intimately were shortened by the development of quick and modern means of transport and communication. Western institutions and Western literature created a new class of intellectuals who became ardent pupils of radical writers like Bentham and Burke. Indian nationalism took its birth in the cradle of the British Government in this country.

Such a development, however, failed to please the imperialist policy-makers who employed every device and ingenuity to keep the Indian people disunited and weak They succeeded in their designs, but only partially. Pakistan came into existence, but it did not purchase any permanence for British rule in this country. It was indeed impossible for it to resist the tide of nationalism which was further strengthened by world opinion in favour of Indian freedom. Nevertheless, India is deeply indebted to Britain for giving her the blessings of the rule of law and for introducing her to Western institutions and the parliamentary system of government For this reason, Britain's legacy to her is both precious and enduring. The following pages present a detailed survey of both the good and the bad aspects of British dominion in India. The last chapter gives a brief account of her achievements since independence.

I am grateful to Mr. D S. Bakhle, I.C.S. (Retired), Mr. Frank R. Moraes, Editor-in-Chief, *The Indian Express*, Bombay, and Prof. D. R. Sardesai for going through the manuscript. I am equally thankful to Mr. C. V. Radhakrishnan and Mr. V. A. E. Rasquinha for helping me in many ways in the preparation of this book.

INTRODUCTION

ENGLAND's relations with India began in 1600 A.D. when a Company of London merchants received a Charter from Queen Elizabeth to trade with the East Indies. The main object of the enterprise was to traffic in the luxuries of the rich, in spices, silks, precious stones, camphor, indigo and sulphur.[1] Long before securing their sovereign's formal sanction, the English merchant adventurers had been earnestly seeking opportunities to participate in the prosperous trade with the eastern countries. They had good reasons for entertaining such aspirations. England had given ample proofs of her skill and resourcefulness as a maritime power. Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the world in 1579 had established beyond a shadow of doubt that the island's sea captains were indeed men of great enterprise and intrepidity. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, combined with the exploits of the English 'sea dogs', shattered the insularity of the country and stimulated an irresistible urge among its people to acquire the lucrative seaborne trade with the East.

The Queen's disinclination to encourage their enterprising spirit was, therefore, most vexing to them. Elizabeth was afraid of offending the King of Spain who, backed by the Papal bulls and his own might, claimed to hold the world in fee. The amazing adventures of Portugal and Spain on the high seas in the 15th and 16th centuries had won the admiration of the Pope, as indeed of all others. As a reward for their wonderful discoveries, Pope Alexander VI had 'taken upon himself between 1493 and 1494 to issue no less than four bulls with the object of parcelling out the world between these two nations'. The same Pontiff had permitted the King of Portugal to dignify himself with the sonorous title of 'Lord of the Navigation,

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[1]Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T, *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p.6.

Conquest and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India'.[2]

Such papal dispositions could, however, be held valid only in Latin Christendom, and the Queen of England was certainly under no obligation to honour them. The Holy Father's mandate, dividing the world between his devoted royal followers, was clearly in defiance of the spirit of the times. Neither the doctrine of exclusive rights nor the intolerance betrayed by Barros, Portugal's official historian, by his assertion of Christian superiority,[3] were acceptable to the commercially-minded peoples of England and Holland, whose sole desire in demanding a share in the overseas trade was to enrich their national economies. Whatever her own predilections, it became increasingly difficult for Elizabeth to resist the pressure of her people for permission to establish regular trade relations with the East. On September 24, 1599, a body of merchants formally promoted an enterprise with a subscribed capital of £30,133-3-8. Failing in their attempts to secure the desired charter, they met again on September 23, 1600 and more than doubled the amount of their former subscription. Their pertinacity was at last rewarded and on the last day of the year 1600, the East India Company was incorporated by the name of 'The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading in the East Indies.' Thus, the stage was set for the English to give full rein to their abilities and aptitudes and in the process to acquire one of the most splendid dominions in the East.

With the ascendancy of Portugal firmly established, the British could not, however, expect to have their own way in the East. In fact, the Portuguese claimed prescriptive and monopolistic rights over their so-called Eastern Empire and were not chary of employing force to exclude all competitors from the area. Their swift caravels roamed the high seas from Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, as far east-

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[2] *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p.2

[3] Whiteway, R S., *THE RISE OF PORTUGUESE POWER IN INDIA*, Archibald Constable, 1899, p 21.

ward as Malacca and the famed Spice Islands. Goa was acquired in 1510 and became the capital of Portuguese India. 'In the middle of the sixteenth century,' says the *Cambridge History*, 'when the Portuguese Empire in the East had attained the climax of its grandeur, it was divided into three sections: (1) from Guardafui to Ceylon, (2) from Pegu to China, and (3) all territories on the east coast of Africa.'[4]

It was, however, impossible for a small country like Portugal to sustain her splendour for ever. Long distances, limited man-power resources, demoralisation and competition from powerful maritime countries worked inexorably for the downfall of the empire. But no nation deserved better the rewards and the laurels of enterprise. For Portugal, the fifteenth century had been a period of ceaseless endeavour in probing the mysteries of the seas and in conquering their perils. The rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by Bartholomew Dias in 1487 and the discovery of the sea-way to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498 were indeed epoch-making events. Besides considerably reducing the importance of the Eastern trade through its immemorial land routes, the discovery of the sea lines promoted for the first time a wider understanding of the vastness, the variety and the splendour of the earth. It also contributed to the extension of the frontiers of human knowledge and stimulated new ambitions and enterprises on an unprecedented scale. The conquest of the seas was a necessary prelude to the global integration and the abounding industrialisation that were to change the face of the world and the fate of man in later centuries. Again, the contribution of the Jesuit scholars to the historical and geographical literature of the world is a heritage of inestimable value.

Portugal was eventually superseded by Holland, whose superior seamanship insured her domination of the East. She succeeded in conquering quickly one Portuguese settle-

[4]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA* Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. 17

ment after another so that by the last quarter of the 17th century, the fortunes of this once mighty country had reached their lowest ebb. It lost Amboyna in 1605, Malacca in 1641, and Ceylon in 1658. By 1664, the Dutch had ousted their rivals from most of their early settlements on the Malabar Coast[5] England's overseas expansion was invariably guided by a kindly Providence. Competent observers have expressed doubts whether, left to herself, she would 'ever have managed to overcome the opposition of the Portuguese'.[6] Perhaps, the Dutch too would have prevented the English from securing a firm foothold in India, if their interests had been concentrated in this country. England was certainly no match for the Netherlanders, who gave a cruel demonstration of their superior might by massacring her nationals at Amboyna in February 1623. After that disaster, India became the main centre of British hopes and aspirations, while the principal interests of the Dutch lay in the Archipelago from which they derived their greatest prosperity.

Thus, by a fortunate process of elimination, England was brought face to face with France, the only remaining European power to enter the lists against her in India. The contest was, however, not commercial, but political. Such sordid considerations as buying and selling and profits and dividends did not sully the thoughts of the proud Frenchmen, whose frame of mind was described by Cardinal Richelieu thus: 'The temper of the French being so hasty as to wish the accomplishment of their desires in the moment of their conception, long voyages are not proper for them.' Hampered by unregulated interference in its affairs by its Government, the French East India Company made no great progress with its commercial enterprise, while the turbid politics of India exercised a fatal fascination upon its officials. The issue of the tournament between England

[5]Roberts, P. E., *HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA UNDER THE COMPANY AND THE CROWN*, Oxford University Press, 1945, p. 28.

[6]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. 82.

and France largely settled the fate and the future of India, but before we proceed with the narrative, it would be profitable to survey the state of the country from the beginning of the Moghul rule till the outbreak of the Anglo-French hostilities on Indian soil.

Babar, the founder of the great Moghul Empire in India, was a foreign prince errant from the inconspicuous principality of Farghana in Central Asia. He was not an ordinary soldier of fortune, but an outstanding man of letters and a passionate lover of his homeland. He conquered India in two hard-fought battles and by 1527 became her unchallenged master. He was not a spartan, and his zest for enjoyment was prodigious, but even his excesses were humanized by 'a breath of poetry.'[7] His *Memoirs* reveal the extent and depth of his perception and are justly held 'to rank with the confessions of St. Augustine and Rousseau and the memoirs of Gibbon and Newton'.[8] In spite of his glorious victories and possession of glittering prizes, his heart was never in India and, till the end of his life, he yearned to return to his native land which he loved with the passionate fervour of an exile. This remarkable man, who combined in himself the rare qualities of soldier, sportsman and scholar, died in December 1530 at the age of forty-seven. Of him, we might well say with the poet:

Death makes no conquest of this Conqueror,
For now he lives in Fame.

His son and successor, Humayun, was wholly unequal to the task of consolidating the heritage bequeathed to him. He was defeated and expelled from the country by an Afghan, Sher Shah, whom a distinguished writer has acclaimed as 'the greatest of the Muslim rulers of India'. In spite of his humble origin, Sher Shah rose to become one of the most benevolent sovereigns and showed unfailing interest and solicitude towards the poor peasants, for whose benefit he introduced far-reaching land reforms,

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[7]Lane-Poole, Stanley, *BABAR—RULERS OF INDIA SERIES*, Clarendon Press, 1899, p 12.

[8]Edwardes, S M, *BABAR: DIARIST AND DESPOT*, A. M Philpot, p 106

which were later adopted and improved upon by Akbar's Minister, the sagacious Todar Mal. It was unfortunate that this excellent ruler could not, as he himself once exclaimed when observing his grey hair in a mirror, ascend the throne until the time of the evening prayer. After his death, the empire was regained by Humayun who did not, however, live long to enjoy the sweets and delights of his recovered sovereignty.

Then came Akbar, who by his benevolence and broad humanity, won the love and esteem of his people as the most sincere and gifted of all the incarnations of enlightened despotism. He abolished all hateful imposts and discriminatory measures intended to stigmatize non-Muslims as a conquered race. He condemned the bigotry and intolerance of his co-religionists by proclaiming the excellence of all faiths and set an example in catholicity by 'prostrating himself before the God of all and discarding the priesthood of all.' He promoted competent Hindus to positions of dignity, trust and responsibility and succeeded in winning their unswerving loyalty and devotion to his person and throne. Though Maharana Pratap Singh of Mewar stubbornly refused to render allegiance to the Emperor of Delhi and heroically suffered incredible privations by his defiance, most of the Rajput princes became enthusiastic supporters of Akbar's rule.

The Emperor was indeed far ahead of his times and in his desire to establish a new order, he attempted to lead his people along the path of reform by forced marches. His synthetic religion deeply offended orthodox opinion and failed to win adherents outside his own intimate circle of companions and admirers. Akbar failed to see, as Augustus long before him had realised, that it is not good for the present to break too sharply with the past. Since the beginning of civilisation, *festina lente*, make haste slowly, has furnished a sure foundation for the consolidation of human society. Apart from trying to play Providence to his people, Akbar brooked no challenge to his paramountcy. His conquests and annexations have been

strongly condemned by many writers and one historian goes so far as to describe him as 'a strong and stout annexationist before whose sun the modest star of Dalhousie pales'.

Nevertheless, Akbar was a Titan, who towered far above his contemporaries both in strength and wisdom. Robert Bryan assesses the Emperor's character in these eloquent words: 'The wonder of his age, he does not diminish in stature with the passage of time. Part mystic, part man of action, gentle and cruel, tolerant and self-willed, ascetic and voluptuary, he astonishes us to-day by the complexity, but still more by the intense force of his character. The hope expressed by his father, that his fame would spread through all the world, has been fulfilled. The child born in poverty and flight in the desert of Sind became Akbar the Great Moghul, one of the great men of the world.'

Jehangir, who succeeded his father, was a pleasure-loving monarch who, surrendering the cares and responsibilities of office to Nurjehan, his beautiful but domineering queen, retired into the recesses of his palace to enjoy the delights of the wine cup in gay abandon. He set a wicked and dangerous example to his successors by aspiring for the throne even in the life-time of his father. Sir Thomas Roe, King James' ambassador at Jehangir's court, was a man of keen perception and sound judgment. He observed in India the strange spectacle of darkness at noon. Behind an impressive facade of might and majesty, the Moghul empire nursed a fatal malady. In these oft-quoted words, Roe pronounced his verdict on the Indian polity of the time, as exemplified by the Emperor: 'His greatness substantially is not in itself, but in the weakness of his neighbours, whom like an overgrown pike he feeds on as fry. Pride, pleasure and riches are their best description. Honesty and truth, discipline, civility, they have none, or very little.' The English envoy noticed that the Moghuls were totally destitute of sea power. Even Akbar, who enjoyed a plenitude of military might in his realm, was forced to beseech the permission of the Portuguese for sending his

ships to the Red Sea.[9] Jehangir's indifference to the concerns of the State and his inaccessibility disgusted Roe, who complained that his mission to the Emperor had brought him 'nothing but vexation, little honour and less profit.' Nevertheless, like a true patriot, he persevered in his attempts to secure trade concessions for his country, by a judicious recourse to threat and persuasion.[10] The capricious Emperor took the first fatal step towards reversing his father's wise policy of religious tolerance by ordering the demolition of Hindu temples.[11]

The reign of Jehangir's son and successor, Shah Jehan, is memorable for the splendour of his court and for his mighty monuments. Under his rule, the Moghul power reached the greatest heights of glory. The immortal Taj Mahal, conceived as in a dream and executed like a jewel, furnishes a fitting tribute to the unique artistic sensibilities of the grand monarch Describing the pomp and glitter of the Moghuls, Macaulay wrote: 'The beauty and magnificence of the buildings erected by the sovereigns of Hindustan amazed even travellers who had seen St. Peter's. The innumerable retinues and gorgeous decorations which surrounded the throne of Delhi dazzled even eyes which were accustomed to the pomp of the Versailles.'[12] But India under Shah Jehan lived far beyond her means and his costly constructions, though welcome as an outstanding contribution to the country's cultural glory, seriously depleted and embarrassed the finances of the State. His encouragement of pomp and pageantry and the growing addiction of the court and the nobles to enervating luxury, gravely undermined the moral and military strength of the empire. Truly did Seneca warn centuries ago that excess of anything strangles the soul. Besides his besetting

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[9]Moreland, W. H., *FROM AKBAR TO AURANGZEB*, Macmillan, 1923, p 10

[10]*ENGLISH FACTORIES IN INDIA*, 1618-1621, Vol. I, Edited by W. Foster, Oxford University Press, 1906, pp viii, ix.

[11]Saksena, Banarsi Prasad, *HISTORY OF SHAHJAHAN OF DIHLI*, India Press, 1932, p 293.

[12]*THE WORKS OF LORD MACAULAY. ESSAYS AND BIOGRAPHIES*, Vol. III, Longmans, pp 195, 196.

weakness for expensive projects and pleasures, the Emperor became an unmitigated bigot and ordered the destruction of all newly-built Hindu shrines, especially in the holy city of Banaras. He flagrantly misused State patronage to encourage apostasy.[13]

Unswerving in his allegiance to the family tradition, Aurangzeb, his son, captured the throne of Delhi by liquidating his rival brothers and by condemning his father to a life of enforced inaction at his Agra palace. He was, however, a remarkable man who, soon after his assumption of the imperial mantle, made a clean sweep of all the effeminacies and corruptions that had poisoned the court life. He lived in exemplary simplicity and was deeply versed in the theology of Islam, whose exacting prescriptions he tried to follow with undeviating devotion. Every circumstance favoured his attaining fame as the greatest Moghul. 'It has,' says Tod, 'seldom occurred that so many distinguished princes were contemporary as during the reign of Aurangzeb.'[14] But, with a fatal wantonness, the Emperor threw away the opportunity of capturing the hearts of the able men in the country. Despite his towering qualities, he was treacherous, suspicious, bigoted and ambitious. He failed to perceive, as the Greek sophists had recognised long before him, that *man* is the measure of all things, standing supreme and apart from the rest of creation. If only Aurangzeb had known this simple but eternal truth, he would have realised the iniquity of persecuting his fellow-men merely because his non-Muslim subjects chose to worship the God of all in their own way. His intolerable aversion for them, which haunted him like a malevolent spirit throughout his long reign, hastened his destruction and reduced the empire of Babar to dust and ashes

His quarrel with the premier Rajput States of Mewar and Marwar was suicidal. He incurred the undying enmity of the brave Rathors of Marwar by refusing to

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[13]Saksena, Banarsi Prasad, *HISTORY OF SHAHJAHAN OF DIHLI*, India Press, 1932, p 295.

[14]Tod, Lt Col James, *ANNALS AND ANTIQUITIES OF RAJASTHAN*, Vol I, Smith Elder, 1832, p. 389

recognise the succession of Maharaja Jaswant Singh's infant son except on his own insulting terms. With the aid of his superior resources and armies, the Emperor carried sword and fire into Marwar, but, however ruthless and extensive his devastations, the Rajputs successfully foiled his attempts to destroy the ancient State. They were led by the indomitable Durgadas whose feats of valour and daring have won for him legendary fame in the annals of Rajasthan. Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar, the scion of the famous Rana Pratap, took up the cause of the helpless Maharanis and their infant son and delivered crippling blows at the invading armies, many of whose commanders, according to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the eminent historian of the Moghuls, preferred to stay in their camps or return to the security of their homes rather than face the desperate Rajputs.

Raj Singh, who is criticized by Tod for his 'ill-judged humanity' towards the wicked and unscrupulous invaders, addressed a letter of remonstrance to the Emperor, reprimanding him for reviving the hateful Jaziya tax on the Hindus and for ruining the country by his morbid fanaticism. 'If your Majesty,' wrote the great Rajput, 'places any faith in those books by distinction called divine, you will there be instructed that God is the God of all mankind, not the God of Mahomedans alone.' Sarkar believes that the letter was written, not by Raj Singh, but by Shivaji, the Maratha King, but its doubtful authorship does not by any means detract from the value of the epistle or reverse the fact that the Maharana of Mewar took the lead in drawing the sword against Aurangzeb's senseless persecution.

Meanwhile, another formidable enemy began to attract the Emperor's attention. As fighting men, the Marathas were in many ways different from the Rajputs They were more than a match for the wily Emperor and were not loath to use his own weapons to defeat his designs. They met strategem with strategem and treachery with intelligent anticipation. Their mode of warfare, helped by the terrain of their country, bewildered and demoralised

the imperial forces. Against these brave and resourceful hill-men, Aurangzeb vainly hurled his armed hordes and, after a prolonged conflict, met his own doom and hastened the destruction of his empire. But he did not know that such a terrible fate awaited him when he left Ajmer for the Deccan on September 8, 1681.

Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha empire, was a man of genius, who moulded heroes out of clay and the glory of whose achievements has grown with the passage of time. His mother, a remarkable woman, ordained that her son should not sink into ignoble anonymity by joining the motley crowds that filled the Muslim courts. Assisted by an able and astute teacher, she carefully trained him for the exalted mission of establishing justice, tolerance and righteousness in the country. He was taught to admire the heroes of the Epics, who were held before him as the splendid exemplars of the ancient world.

Shivaji was a brilliant military commander, who gained the admiration and affection of his troops, not only because he watched over every detail of their welfare and won his battles more by strategy than by blood, but also because he was always in the forefront of all actions where personal example and daring could settle the issue. His generous behaviour towards the defeated enemy, his humanity, his sense of chivalry and his respect for other faiths won him the unstinted admiration of even his most implacable enemies. No less a person than Khafi Khan, the court historian of Aurangzeb, concedes that the King of Maharashtra and his men "made it a rule" never to molest women or to hurt the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims. This remarkable characteristic of Shivaji's nature, says Justice Ranade, 'stands out in marked contrast with the looseness and ferocity of those times'. Another eminent writer, Dr. P. V. Kane, records that 'divine honours' were paid to Shivaji even in his life-time for so valiantly and effectively delivering his people from oppression and misrule.[15] This great man, who fought against

[15]Kane, P. V., *HISTORY OF DHARMASASTRA,* Vol. II, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941, p 975.

tremendous odds throughout his life and finally succeeded in creating the Maratha nation almost by his own unaided exertions and devotion to noble causes, has won warm tributes from many discerning foreign writers. 'It requir- ed,' says Mountstuart Elphinstone, 'a genius like his to avail himself as he did of the mistakes of Aurangzeb, by kindling a zeal for religion and, through that, a national spirit among the Marathas. It was by these feelings that his government was upheld after it passed into feeble hands, and was kept together in spite of numerous inter- nal disorders, until it had established its supremacy over the greater part of India.'[16]

It was Maharashtra's great misfortune that Shivaji's eldest son, Sambhaji, proved himself utterly incompetent to carry on his father's exalted mission. He was a brave man, but an irresponsible and impetuous profligate, and, during one of his drinking bouts, he was captured by Aurangzeb and offered life for apostasy. His indignant reply, though couched in a rather indecorous language, was a fitting rejoinder to the Emperor's calculated affront to the son of a great man. Sambhaji paid with his life for his daring and the details of his death roused his people to an all-consuming flame of detestation. There could be no compromise with the heartless invader. They decided to settle their accounts with him till either they or he perished.

The war of liberation was carried on by the Marathas with amazing pertinacity, first, under the leadership of Shivaji's younger son, Rajaram, and after his death in March 1700, under his widow, the celebrated Tarabai, who, by personal example and daring, inspired her people to perform prodigies of valour in their campaigns against the Moghuls. She caused immense mortification to Aurangzeb by proving the emptiness of his boast that after her husband's death, he would succeed in annihilat- ing the Marathas.

[16]Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *THE HISTORY OF INDIA*, John Murray, 1874, p. 647.

Grant Duff gives a vivid description of the armed might that was hurled against the humble hillmen of Maharashtra. 'The display of power,' he writes, 'presented by Aurangzeb's march into the Deccan was grand and imposing to a degree which has seldom been surpassed.' The cavalry, assembled from different parts of India and from abroad, was the flower of his army and presented an array of gigantic men and horses. The infantry was no less numerous, well-equipped and terror-inspiring. The imperial artillery, consisting of a wide variety of cannons, was led by European gunners who had seen active service in many foreign lands. And yet the seemingly invincible armies battled in vain against the hardy Marathas who fought for their homeland with unexampled zeal inspite of the inferiority of their numbers and the poor quality of their arms. Thus, at the time of Aurangzeb's death on February 20, 1707 at Ahmednagar, his mighty forces, which had descended upon the Marathas twenty-six years before, had been reduced into a feeble and derelict instrument, thoroughly demoralised and inviting derisive comments on their ineffectiveness. The Emperor died a sad and disillusioned man, belatedly realising that his Himalayan follies and crimes accounted for the dissolution of his empire. Perhaps, his career would have been less destructive and even useful had he known and realised the wisdom of Emperor Septimus' words: 'I have been everything and it is worth nothing'.

The Marathas, though badly mauled by the prolonged conflict, recovered rapidly under Shahu, Sambhaji's son, who was released soon after Aurangzeb's death. The stage was now set for the advent of the Peshwas, under whose energetic leadership, the Deccan highlanders made amazingly rapid conquests in the north and became the foremost military power in the country. Bajirao, the son of the sagacious Balaji Viswanath, the first Peshwa, played an outstanding part in the extension of the Maratha Empire and by his brilliant victories against the Muslim powers, including the veteran Nizam-ul-mulk, the founder of

Hyderabad, he won renown as a 'heaven-born cavalry leader'. He was the *beau ideal* of a soldier, strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring. By personal example, he inspired confidence in his leadership among his followers, some of whom became famous in history as founders of the Maratha states in the North and in Gujerat. It was during his Peshwaship that the Maratha confederacy came into existence. Bajirao, says Sir Richard Temple, 'is remembered to this day among the Marathas as the fighting Peshwa and as the incarnation of Hindu energy'.[17]

His son, Balaji Bajirao, was not an outstanding soldier, but the dominion of his people reached its greatest extent under his leadership. He worked ceaselessly for the good of his realm. Sensible of his benevolent rule, the Maratha peasantry 'have ever since blessed the days of Nana Saheb Peshwa'. He had the supreme satisfaction of witnessing Maratha horse, fully one hundred thousand strong, slaking their thirst in all the great rivers of India. So great was the power and influence of the Marathas during this period that even the disaster of Panipat in 1761 did not materially affect their fortunes.

Part of the reason for their remarkable recovery was the outstanding calibre of Madhav Rao. In spite of his inexperience and youthfulness, the new Peshwa succeeded in rehabilitating the fortunes of his people and in re-establishing their ascendancy in the country's affairs. He was a generous and kind-hearted ruler who undertook far-reaching civil and military reforms. In an eloquent tribute to this great and excellent prince, Sir Richard Temple says: 'Indeed, he is for ever to be revered as a model prince, the *flos regum*, and as one of the finest characters that the Hindu nationality has ever produced.'[18] Grant Duff holds that 'the plains of Panipat were not more fatal to the Maratha empire than the early

[17]Temple, Sir Richard, *ORIENTAL EXPERIENCES*, John Murray, 1883, pp. 390, 391.

[18]*Ibid*, p 396.

end of this excellent prince'.[19] Assessing the achievements of the first four Peshwas, Temple declares that 'none of the many lines of Hindu sovereigns in India has ever shown a series of sovereigns equal to the Peshwas'. After them, the history of the Marathas becomes dull, disappointing and even disgusting.

In the Punjab, religious persecution welded a pacific community into a militant fraternity. Basically, Baba Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was a reformer. He laid great emphasis on personal exemplariness both in thought and action as a means of securing bliss and strove to reform society by evolving a set of eclectic principles of universal appeal. He had no intention of founding a new church or state, but his successors discovered that only by giving a credal and institutional basis to his teachings could they be propagated with greater effect. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was the victim of cruel persecution and was put to death as a rebel in 1675 and his body publicly exposed in the streets of Delhi.[20] His son, Guru Gobind Singh, when he came of age, 'resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life and upon giving precision and aim to the broad and general institutions of Nanak', under the two-fold impulse of avenging his own and his country's wrongs. He himself suffered terrible losses in the war against the Moghuls and eventually retired into the wastes of Bhatinda, from where he wrote his famous *Zafar Namah* or 'Victorious Epistle', in which, in the true style of Raj Singh's protest, he reproached the Emperor for his intolerance and misdemeanours and dwelt upon the merits of Sikhism and the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind was a born leader of men and though fated to meet a premature and tragic end, he had the satisfaction of fulfilling the prophecy about him that 'he would convert jackals into tigers and sparrows into hawks.' In

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[19]Grant Duff, J. C., *A HISTORY OF THE MAHRATTAS*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1921, p. 577.

[20]Cunningham, J. D., *A HISTORY OF THE SIKHS*, Printed & Published by N. Roy at the Bangabasi Press, Calcutta, 1904, p. 96.

intelligence, capacity and fixed purpose, he was, to quote Sir Lepel Griffin, 'infinitely the superior of all his predecessors'. The Punjab where the Sikhs predominate, is the sword-arm of India. This small but vigorous community owes its vital spirit to the sagacious and heroic endeavours of its great Guru. The empire of the Guru was, however, over the hearts and the religious beliefs of his adherents. No state had yet been formed by the Sikhs who had organised themselves into a number of confederacies or *misals*, each group being led by a Sardar. The very fluidity of their organisation helped them to survive the savage invasions of the Persian conqueror, Nadir Shah, and the Afghan King, Ahmed Shah Abdali. When the need arose for welding the various *misals* into a single body, Ranjit Singh supplied it by transforming the Sikhs into a powerful military state in the Punjab.

The sturdy Jats in the districts of Mathura and Agra, who had long been smarting under the yoke of the Delhi Kings, asserted their independence soon after Aurangzeb's departure from his capital in 1679 to wage his dreary and suicidal wars against the Rajputs and the Marathas. Suraj Mal, who became the ruler of Bharatpur after the death of his patron, Badan Singh, in 1756, was the greatest Jat leader. He was a soldier-statesman, who envisaged the establishment of Hindu supremacy in India without offending Muslim susceptibilities. He proposed that a scion of the House of Babar should be used as a *roi faineant*, with the Nawab of Oudh as the Vazier or Prime Minister of the realm. Real power should, however, be exercised by the Marathas by virtue of their military superiority. But this ambitious project was destroyed by the rashness of the commander of the Maratha armies. His high-handedness and senseless acts of vandalism in the Red Fort at Delhi and the defeat of the Marathas at Panipat, suddenly ended the dreams of the great Jat patriot.

Another people to offer effective resistance to Moghul oppression were the brave Bundelas, who acquired a formidable fighting capacity under the leadership of Raja Chhatrasal A contemporary of Shivaji, Chhatrasal plead-

ed with the Maratha King to be allowed to fight under his banner, but was persuaded to return to his native Bundelkhand and raise the standard of revolt from there. The Raja, the news of whose return to his homeland was 'grateful to Bundela ears', was hailed as the 'champion of the Hindu faith and Kshatriya honour'.[21] For over thirty years, Chhatrasal fought the Moghuls with relentless pertinacity and nearly succeeded in restoring Bundelkhand's sovereignty to its people. Perhaps, he could have accomplished this task earlier and more thoroughly with Maratha assistance, but such help came to him only during the Peshwaship of Bajirao I. The Raja died in December 1731, full of years and glory.

The collapse of the Moghul empire tempted its friends and foes alike to set up their own independent sovereignties. The Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawabs of Oudh and Bengal gave the lead in such cynical opportunism and ingratitude. Repelled by the turbulence and corruption of Delhi politics, Nizam-ul-Mulk, the founder of the Asaf Jah dynasty, retired to the Deccan where he began to function as a monarch in his own right. Brought up under the fostering care of Aurangzeb, he had acquired some of the forbidding qualities of his master, more especially the art of dissimulation and subterfuge, which helped him most in sustaining his power in the south even in the heyday of Maratha glory. 'If,' says Briggs, 'pliableness of will, unparalleled duplicity, and utter unscrupulousness constitute the necessary elements of greatness, Nizam-ul-Mulk possessed them in a degree passing belief.'[22] Sardesai, the well-known historian of the Marathas, holds that Shahu, the Maratha King, was primarily responsible for preserving the Hyderabad state from destruction by restraining his militant Prime Minister from annihilating it.[23] Before his death in June 1748, the Nizam advised his

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[21]Sarkar, Sir Jadunath, *HISTORY OF AURANGZEB,* Vol. V, M. C. Sarkar, 1924, p. 394.

[22]Briggs, Henry George, *THE NIZAM,* Vol I, Bernard Quaritch, 1861, p. 53

[23]Sardesai, G. S, *NEW HISTORY OF THE MARATHAS,* Vol. II, Phoenix Publications, 1948, p. 100.

son, Nasar Jang, to live on friendly terms with the Marathas, though he himself was denied that advantage in his own lifetime. But whatever vitality the state possessed, disappeared with its founder, whose successors became mere pawns in the political contest between the English and the French in the Deccan.

Oudh was another succession state, whose credentials to independent existence were bogus. Sadat Khan, who transformed the province into a principality, was a native of Mesopotamia and rose to incredible heights of power and prosperity with sword and intrigue as his helpmates. Enraged at Nizam-ul-Mulk's elevation in preference to his own claims, he instigated Nadir Shah, the terrible King of Persia, who was already in India (1739), to descend upon Delhi. The pitiless invader demanded from the impoverished Emperor a ransom of twenty crores of rupees in place of a modest fifty lakhs.[24] Sadat Khan, who was present in the capital when the Persian inflicted ghastly barbarities on its helpless residents, ended his life soon after the holocaust. His son-in-law, Safdar Jang, who succeeded him, was insolent, treacherous and impervious to wise counsel. In absurd prodigality, he bore a striking resemblance to Caligula and dissipated large sums of money on costly eccentricities. Safdar Jang was followed by Shuja-ud-daula, to whom independence was an insupportable burden. He generously surrendered it to the British, who readily agreed to strawstuff his sovereignty and bolster it up with their bayonets, thus giving a great fillip to corruption and misrule in his realm. Oudh was mercifully merged into British India in 1856.

Bengal, a rich province, was generally well-governed In 1742, Alivardi Khan, a determined Afghan, seized the province and ruled it wisely and competently. He declined to attack the English settlements with the shrewd remark: 'It is now difficult to extinguish the fire on land; but should the sea be in flames, who could put them out?'

[24] Srivastava, A L, *THE FIRST TWO NAWABS OF OUDH*, Upper India Publishing House, 1933, p 72

This prudent man did not, however, succeed in bequeathing his wisdom and moderation to his favourite nephew and adopted son, Mirza Mahmud, who succeeded him. Mirza, about whom we will hear a good deal later, embellished his name, with the glittering title of Siraj-ud-daula, or the Lamp of the State. Like Oudh and Hyderabad, Bengal rendered little or nominal allegiance to Delhi

It was Britain's great good fortune that she was able to lay the foundations of her Indian empire in the country's most vulnerable regions. The succession states had no inherent capacity to resist resolute attacks upon them, for, apart from the unpopularity of their governments, their armies were generally weak, ill-organised and of an inferior calibre. In the affairs of men, it is useless to speculate on the play of the contingent and the unforeseen, but it is a fact of considerable historical significance that at the outset of their rule in India, the British were providentially saved from coming into collision with such energetic powers as the Marathas. There is refreshing candour in the observation of Sir Alfred Lyall when he says: 'On the whole, there is good ground for the opinion that if at the time of the dissolution of the Moghul Empire India had been left to herself, if the Europeans had not just appeared in the field, the whole of southern and central India would have fallen under the Maratha dominion. It was very fortunate for the English that they did not come into collision with such antagonists until their own strength had matured; since there can be no doubt that throughout the later stage of the tournament for the prize of ascendancy between England and the native powers, our most dangerous challengers were the Marathas.'[25]

It is true that, as early as 1687, the aims of the Company were defined as being 'to establish such a polity of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to maintain both....as may be the foundation

[25]Lyall, Sir Alfred, *THE RISE AND EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH DOMINION IN INDIA,* John Murray, 1907, pp. 136, 137.

of a large, well-grounded, sure English dominion in India for all time to come'. But such a policy, so valiantly and grandiloquently formulated, threatened to destroy all vestiges of British power in India when it was sought to be enforced against Aurangzeb who graciously pardoned the supercilious foreigners after exacting an abject apology from them. As Roberts rightly remarks, 'the position of the English in India was only saved by their sea power.' But, with the advent of the nineteenth century, nothing availed the Indian powers to halt British expansion. Perhaps, concerted action on an unprecedented scale could have checked the tide, but, then, examples of unity of purpose and action have seldom illumined the pages of India's past history.

It was necessary for Britain to frustrate France's dreams of empire in India before realising her own. The long drawn out and labyrinthine wars of succession in Carnatic and Hyderabad gave the European contestants an excellent opportunity to pursue their own ambitions by seeking to supplant each other. Dupleix, who became Governor of the French settlements in India in 1741, shared his countrymen's contempt for goods and godowns and cherished vaulting ambitions of planting his nation's greatness on Indian soil. He was a clear-sighted and determined patriot, who decided to realise his dreams by intervening in the dynastic disputes of Hyderabad and Carnatic. He supported the claims of Nasar Jang, the son of Nizam-ul-Mulk, who died in 1748, against the pretensions of the dead ruler's grandson, Muzaffar Jang. Similarly, he championed the cause of Chanda Saheb in the hope of establishing French ascendancy in Carnatic. He made great progress towards his goal by giving military help to his allies, Nasar Jang and Chanda Saheb, whose combined forces defeated and killed Anwarudin, the Nawab of Carnatic, in the battle of Ambur in 1749. Mohamed Ali, the illegitimate son of the slain Nawab, fled for his life and shut himself up in the fort of Trichinopoly. It was a shining hour for Dupleix. South India's two powerful princes be-

came his pliant allies, showing great earnestness to retain his friendship. The English watched these proceedings with dismay, but protest was embarrassing, as they themselves had shown the way to Dupleix by intervening in the domestic concerns of the Tanjore principality. Out of desperation, they plunged into the vortex of the southern conflict by upholding the aspirations of the rival condidates to the *gadis* of Hyderabad and Carnatic.

It was at this juncture that a remarkable Englishman emerged from obscurity to shatter Dupleix's well-nurtured plans. Robert Clive's grateful countrymen have smothered him with superlative praise, describing him as the greatest British soldier since Marlborough.[26] Whether he deserves the encomiums, so lavishly bestowed upon him, is a matter of opinion, but there is no doubt that he was largely responsible for saving the situation for the English at a time when the French enjoyed a plenitude of power and prestige in South India. Clive executed with brilliant success his audacious plan for deflecting Chanda Saheb from laying siege to Trichinopoly by attacking Arcot, the capital of the province. The expedition itself was a pitiful affair. It consisted of a small number of men, but the determination with which Clive marched towards his goal, amidst rain and storm, unnerved the defenders of Arcot, who found greater wisdom in flight than in facing such a resolute enemy. Clive entered Arcot on September 12, 1751, without opposition, and showed the same determination and resourcefulness when defending the fort. His defence of Arcot 'was a feat of arms immediately famous,' but it would have been impossible except against an enemy of the most 'blackguardly character.' Later, his victory over the French at Kaveripak, accomplished through night attack, completed the discomfiture of his country's rivals. This action, it is claimed, 'changed the balance of French and English influence in India.'

As the French arms suffered more and more reverses in Carnatic, the position of Bussy, who had ensconced himself

[26]Coupland, Sir Reginald, *INDIA; A RE-STATEMENT*, Oxford University Press, 1945, p. 21

in the court of Hyderabad by putting Salabat Jang on the *gadi*, became increasingly untenable. His ascendancy over the government of the state, gained through his *corps d'armee*, provoked deep resentment both against himself and his countrymen. To add to the misfortunes of the French, a hot-headed and stiff-necked martinet in the person of Lally was sent out to put the French Indian affairs in order. Lally's rash adventure against the English ended in the decisive defeat of the French in the Battle of Wandiwash in January 1760. Pondicherry, their capital, was captured in the following year—an event that marked 'the complete and final termination of the contest between France and England in India.' There was an inexorable inevitability in the defeat of the French in India. Unlike the British enterprise, the French trading concern was hampered at every turn by unregulated interference in its affairs. The attitude of the French towards their Company is exemplified by the contemptuous reference of Lally's biographers to the Directors, who are described as being better fitted to weigh out pepper than to comprehend the problems of a people's expansion! In any case, it was impossible for France to retain her possessions in India without naval supremacy which had already passed into the hands of her enemy. France's exit left Britain free to strike for unchallenged supremacy in the country.

The conquest of Bengal presented no serious problem to the British. To advance into that province was 'to penetrate India by its soft and unprotected side.' Its ruler, Siraj-ud-daula, was an impetuous young man, who has been described as a 'mean ruffian.' His ignorance of men and things was as massive as were his ferocity and witlessness. He believed that the entire continent of Europe was populated by not more than ten thousand people! Siraj had few friends and many enemies, all of whom plotted to end the nightmare of his misgovernment. When he faced the English on June 23, 1757 at Plassey with his large, ill-organised and disaffected army, the issue was never in doubt either to himself or to his antagonists.

Much has been written about the Battle of Plassey.

It undoubtedly marked the opening of a new chapter in the history of British India, but as a battle it was a sham and a fraud. It was much worse than the notorious *gymkhana* wars which the British waged in later years. Far from winning the plaudits of his contemporaries, Clive, the victor, became an object of ridicule. In the first draft of his famous history, but omitted in the subsequent editions presumably in deference to his hero's susceptibilities, Orme describes Clive's state of mind on the eve of the make-believe battle Clive saw the morning break with increasing trepidation. Seeing the enemy's array from a vantage ground, "he was surprised at their numerous, splendid and martial appearance. His companion asked him what he thought would be the event; to which he replied: 'We must make the best fight we can during the day, and at night sling our muskets over our shoulders and march back to Calcutta.'" Clive was, however, assured by his companion that there was no need for exhibiting such pusillanimity and that the victors of many battles in the south would win in Bengal too.[27]

Notwithstanding the glamour that surrounds the name of Clive, there is no doubt that the events in which he participated were far more momentous than his own contribution to them. It certainly did not require the generalship of a Marlborough to win the Battle of Plassey when a large segment of the enemy's army under Mir Jafar had come prepared to desert at the first blast of the trumpet. The Nawab himself was thoroughly confounded, not knowing whom to trust and whom to avoid in his own camp. 'Clive,' says a British writer, 'may be pitied for the trick that fortune, all too kind, played him on this occasion.' She would have saved him from 'the cruel jeers and envious thrusts of too many of his contemporaries' if he had won the day after severe and desperate fighting.

Reputations might or might not have been made at Plassey, but enormous fortunes were certainly made after

[27]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p 150.

the battle. As a reward for his perfidy, Mir Jafar was raised to the Nawabship and the grateful man disbursed staggeringly large sums of money among his benefactors. 'By a private arrangement,' says Roberts, 'made with Mir Jafar before Plassey it was stipulated that £400,000 should be given to the army and navy and £120,000 (afterwards apparently increased to £150,000) to the Select Committee of six persons. Additional presents were afterwards received. Clive's share in all amounted to £234,000 and other members of the Council received from £50,000 to £80,000.' The foolish stooge believed that by so heavily bribing the kingmaker and his colleagues, he would succeed in 'purchasing immunity from his obligations to the Company.' Calcutta went into raptures over the transfer of so much wealth to English hands. "The loot arrived, July 6, and was received rapturously 'A world of guns' were fired, the Ladies all got 'footsore with dancing;' and 'a Bumper goes to your (Clive's) health each day in every house from the Admiral's downwards.'"[28]

Clive believed that altogether the Company and private persons pocketed three million sterling after Plassey. To the participants in the plunder, India was truly a land bristling with the pagoda trees. All that the drones that did no good to the public hive and the chronic addicts to violence and adventure that could not be contained in their own country had to do was to set sail to India and having arrived there, indulge to their heart's content in the pleasant pastime of shaking the wealth-bearing trees, gather as much plunder as they could carry, and return home to poison the morals and the public life of their country with their tainted money.

In this remorseless hunt for riches in a country, where the majority of its inhabitants went hungry and naked, Clive set the most reprehensible example. To sustain his newly-acquired title of Omrah or noble, he caused Mir Jafar to grant him £30,000 a year. When he returned

[28]Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G T., *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p. 92

home finally, he was reported to have become the King's wealthiest subject—no mean achievement for a man who began as a clerk on £10! And yet he had the temerity to exclaim before his investigators: 'Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation!' Clive was in fact largely responsible for bleeding the rich province of Bengal white and for driving even the obsequious Nawab to desperation and bankruptcy. He was thoroughly unscrupulous and shamelessly double-crossed the notorious Amichand, a fellow-conspirator, who had connived at the downfall of Siraj-ud-daula for an extravagant financial consideration. It is impossible to doubt the verdict of Davies on this man when he says: 'It would be unfair to judge Clive according to enlightened humanity.'[29]

Apart from its spoliation, Bengal could not expect to enjoy peace and prosperity so long as it was exposed to the dual government of the *de facto* and the *de jure* rulers. Reduced to the position of a figure-head, Mir Jafar sank into dull indifference towards his duties and obligations, while the Company, whose interests were still primarily commercial, drained the province of its resources by aggrandizing its trade in some of the most valuable commodities. 'By investing themselves,' says Sir Alfred Lyall, 'with political attributes without discarding their commercial character, they produced an almost unprecedented conjunction which engendered intolerable abuses and confusion in Bengal.'

Mir Jafar was replaced by a seemingly more pliable Nawab, who gained his elevation by outbidding his predecessor, but such facile changes could not improve a situation which had been rendered chronically critical by the rack-renting revolution. Mir Kasim, the new Nawab, was less stoical and more assertive than his predecessor. He soon discovered that it was impossible to deal with the overbearing and rapacious foreigners on fair terms. Goaded by desperation, he committed some atrocities at Patna

[29]Davies, A Mervyn, *CLIVE OF PLASSEY*, Nicholson & Watson, 1939, p. 291.

and later, in conjunction with the Nawab Vazier of Oudh, fought a disastrous battle against the British at Buxar, September 1764. The ever-obliging Mir Jafar was restored to the *gadi* which he occupied as the Company's most obedient servant till his unlamented death.

In 1765, at the instance of Clive, who had returned to India to put the Company's affairs in order, Emperor Shah Alam granted the English the *diwani* of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa—an empty investiture that cost the recipients the districts of Korah and Allahabad which were ceded to the Emperor in consideration for the grant, in addition to the commitment to pay him an annual tribute of twentysix lakhs of rupees. The *diwani* achieved nothing and it certainly did not end the dual system. Clive was content to retain for the Company control over military and external affairs, delegating the rest of the administrative powers to an Indian minister, Mohamed Reza Khan. Clive's attempts to root out graft and corruption yielded no lasting results, while his plea for purity of conduct in the government of the Company's affairs evoked silent disdain and was dismissed as sanctimonious humbug. Many generations had to pass before the evils of corruption could be destroyed root and branch.

Clive's biographer cannot win wide support for his claim that his subject was 'one of England's greatest and most resolute sons,'[30] but there is no doubt that he possessed certain merits that outweighed his faults. He was a sincere patriot, whose 'unfaltering will and uncompromising vigour took the fullest advantage of a peculiarly happy concourse of events firmly to establish the Company's power in the wealthiest province of India.'[31] His political insight warned him against the temptation of annexing Oudh. He wisely left it to time and his successors to undertake bolder projects of conquest, contenting himself with consolidating the Company's present acquisitions.

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[30] Forrest, Sir George, *THE LIFE OF LORD CLIVE*, Vol I, Cassell, 1918, p. 1.

[31] *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. 180.

He was among the earliest Englishmen in India to realise the incompatibility of a trading concern performing the functions of a sovereign government in territories much bigger and more populous than his own motherland and to urge that those responsibilities should be assumed direct by the Crown of England. In spite of his great qualities, Clive was essentially a soldier and it needed the abilities and the acumen of an administrator to establish an orderly and efficient government in the Company's territories. That task was performed by Warren Hastings and his successors.

1. *WARREN HASTINGS*

WARREN HASTINGS came to India in 1750 at the age of seventeen when his famous contemporaries were still at school. He was appointed as a clerk of the East India Company on a nominal annual salary of five pounds, his duties being those of a merchant's assistant, that is, to assess the quality of silks and muslins, to prepare invoices and to keep accounts. Such dull and sordid routine of the warehouse was wholly incompatible with the young man's scholarly bent of mind and keen intellect. His record in his school at Westminster bore ample testimony to his brilliance and if cruel necessity had not interrupted his studies, he would in all probability have attained distinction in the life of his own country like his famous schoolfellows—William Cowper, the poet, and Lord Shelbourne, the future Prime Minister of England.

Hastings spent the first three years of his Indian career at Calcutta, from where he was posted to Kasimbazar, a thriving commercial town only two miles from Murshidabad, the capital of the province and the Nawab of Bengal's place of residence. His diligence and ability soon took him into the interior where he organised and administered a sub-factory on behalf of his masters. The prospect of having to live in the midst of an alien people with strange manners and customs did not either dispirit or daunt the young man who welcomed the opportunity to enlarge his mind and to enrich his experience. He knew that the quickest route to the heart of a people is through the language of the country and had accordingly acquired proficiency in Bengali and Urdu, besides a fair acquaintance with Persian, the language of the Muslim court. Sitting in a remote Bengali town, with ample leisure for reflection, Hastings wondered at the vastness of the country, its richness and variety and, above all, the antiquity and the splendour of its civilization Unobscured by prejudice,

his observant eye and his deep understanding stimulated in him a profound and an almost reverent admiration for India's ancient heritage.

In contrast, most of his countrymen in India were stricken with the malady of racial arrogance. Men like Clive, who mercilessly despoiled the country and its people, spoke and acted as if they were heaven-born. They were typical Big Englanders of J. B. Priestley's description—'red-faced, loud-voiced fellows, wanting to go and boss everybody about all over the world.' They were adventurous freebooters with an over-powering ambition to make quick fortunes and return home to flaunt their ill-gotten gains before an honest and industrious community and to dazzle and corrupt those that came near them. Neither the teachings of religion nor the norms of civilized behaviour restrained them in their mad career of rapacity and spoliation. Even Mir Jafar, the perfidious Nawab, whose defection gave the British their sovereignty over Bengal, could claim no immunity from their encroachments. He was deposed and his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, was elevated to his position in October 1760. Heavy bribes were exacted from the new Nawab, who gave them freely in the hope that his generosity would finally liberate him from the malevolent attentions of the king-makers. But his hopes soon proved illusory, for, in the words of Hastings, he was exposed to 'daily affronts such as a spirit superior to that of a worm when trodden on could not have brooked.'[1] Failing in his attempts to relax the strangle-hold of the Company's officials on the trade of the province, he abolished all inland customs at one decisive stroke thus transforming his entire dominion into a free trade area. But this act of justice provoked the bitter animosity of the British and ended in his defeat and destruction. Hastings, who was both dismayed and disgusted with the arbitrariness and the brutality of his countrymen, sailed for England in December 1764, seeing that men like him could not honourably take part in the affairs of the Company in

[1]Moon, Penderel, *WARREN HASTINGS AND BRITISH INDIA*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1947, p. 42.

Bengal. Thus ended the first phase of his career in India lasting for fourteen years.

Hastings returned to Bengal in April 1772 as Governor to prove his mettle as a statesman. In the prevailing circumstances of the province, statesmanship consisted in the establishment of an efficient and benevolent government. In 1769-70 a mighty famine had swept Bengal decimating one-third of an estimated population of fifteen millions. 'The husbandmen,' writes Sir William Hunter, 'sold their cattle; they sold their instruments of agriculture; they devoured their seed grain; they sold their sons and their daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field; and in June 1770 the Resident at the Durbar affirmed that the living were feeding on the dead.'[2] The tragic drama of human misery enacted on such a gigantic scale, did not, however, move the hearts of the Company officials and their associates, the speculators and the blackmarketeers, who ruthlessly exploited the situation for their personal enrichment. Rice, the staple food of the people, was sold at fantastic prices, while the revenue was collected with 'cruel severity.' As Professor A. B. Keith points out, while some of the Company's servants profiteered in necessities, the 'principal deputy added 10 per cent. to the assessments to make good at the expense of the living the losses involved in the wholesale depopulation'.[3] The combined cruelty of man and nature drove thousands of people to abandon agriculture and industry and to seek the security of the jungle, thus confirming the millenniums' old saying of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, that even a wilderness infested with man-eating monsters is preferable to a place governed by wicked rulers.

The disclosures on the state of affairs in India, contained in the reports of the Select and Secret Committees of Parliament appointed in 1772, startled and stung the civi-

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[2]Hunter, Sir W. W., *ANNALS OF RURAL BENGAL*, quoted by *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 501

[3]Keith, Prof. A B, *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA. 1600-1935*, Methuen, 1936, p 58.

lized conscience of the British people. 'We have,' exclaimed Horace Walpole, 'outdone the Spaniards in Peru. They were at least butchers on a religious principle, however diabolical their zeal. We have murdered, deposed, plundered, usurped—nay, what think you of the famine in Bengal, in which three millions perished, being caused by a monopoly of the provisions by the servants of the East India Company?'[4] 'India,' wrote Chatham in 1773, 'teems with iniquities so rank as to smell to earth and heaven.'[5]

Hastings was thus called upon to administer the affairs of a province which, as he himself declared, presented all the features of a 'confused heap as wild as the chaos itself'. There was no precedent or formulated experience to guide him, except his own enlightened mind and a character illumined and 'strengthened by the wisdom, the warnings and the examples of classical society'. He was convinced that Bengal could not be governed well so long as the Nawab was allowed to cherish the illusion that he, and not the East India Company, was the real ruler of the province. 'You must establish your power,' Hastings advised his masters, 'or you must hold it dependent on a superior which I deem to be impossible.' He also warned them that it was futile to expect a competent government of their Indian possessions, bigger than Britain herself, on the basis of a system designed specially to manage the affairs of a trading corporation. Such a constitution, he pointed out, was most ineffective for the 'government of a great kingdom and for the preservation of its riches from private violence and embezzlement.'

He further saw the dangers of minute interference in British Indian affairs from the Company's headquarters since a distance of six months' voyage separated Calcutta from London, thus rendering any direct, continuous and wise control over such a remote charge practically impossible. From his close acquaintance with the

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[4]Davies, A Mervyn, *WARREN HASTINGS: MAKER OF BRITISH INDIA*, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935, p 76

[5]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p.187.

Indian administration, Hastings was convinced that govenment by council was worse than useless. A body consisting of an indeterminate number of members, whose duties often took them away from the seat of government, could not, in the nature of things, function efficiently or effectively. Moreover, the President of the Council was not vested with any special powers even to meet an emergent situation, he being only *primus inter pares* in relation to the other members, except that he was given a casting vote in the event of a tie. Hastings urged that the Governor should be a man of real authority with discretionary powers to override his colleagues. He also suggested that in order to ensure continuity, vigour and consistency in the administration, the Governors should be appointed for a longer period than three years. 'God forbid,' he wrote to Laurence Sullivan, 'that the Government of this fine country should continue to be a mere chair for a triennial succession of indigent adventurers to sit and hatch private fortunes.'[6]

Not all of Hastings' prayers were granted. Before the Directors received his views on the requirements of the Indian administration, they had forwarded to India a document, which reached Calcutta on August 6, 1772, in which they affirmed the determination of the Company 'to stand forth as Dewan and by the agency of the Company's servants to take upon themselves the entire management of the revenues.' It was a momentous decision since it meant that the Company was no longer hesitant or afraid of assuming, in full, the responsibilities of government in India. British rule in this country may well be said to have begun from that date which also marked the passing of the Nawabs of Bengal into history. Hastings, who was scarcely forty years old when he became the Governor, rejoiced at the new developments. The Directors' confidence in him by arming him with full powers 'to make a complete reformation' of the adminis-

[6]Moon, Penderel, *WARREN HASTINGS AND BRITISH INDIA*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1947, p. 113.

tration was not only gratifying to him personally but was admirably suited to meet the difficult situation in Bengal. The few years that followed were indeed the best and the most fruitful years of his official life in India—years, when unhampered by hostile and obstructive colleagues, he transacted a prodigious volume of public business for the good of the people.

Hastings addressed himself assiduously to the task of inspiring public confidence in the Company Government. He suppressed crime and lawlessness with a firm hand and exterminated the large band of marauders, who, masquerading as religious mendicants, perpetrated foul and hideous crimes against a helpless population. He stopped the incursions of the Bhutanese hillmen, whose plundering expeditions had caused much distress in the district of Cooch-Bihar. The restoration of law and order encouraged the terror-stricken and demoralized people to resume their normal avocations. The farmer returned to the plough, thus checking the advance of the jungle, while the numerous class of artisans began to ply their tools again The weaver, who had abandoned the loom, resumed his labours, with the assurance that the products of his industry and skill would not be taken away from him without adequate reward. By a diligent investigation into the working of the Customs, he swept away the enormous abuses that had crept into the system, and in March 1773 issued new regulations retaining only five Customs houses in the entire province The duties were scaled down to 2½ per cent, payment of which ensured an unrestricted flow of goods to their destination. The notorious *dustuk* system, which had given unlimited scope to the Company officials to make large private fortunes by destroying free trade in the province, was abolished, but the monopoly over salt and opium was retained The latter was, however, brought under Government control to prevent abuses[7]

Hastings also fought against waste and corruption, but his success in that direction was rather limited He was

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[7]Moon, Penderel, *WARREN HASTINGS AND BRITISH INDIA.* Hodder and Stoughton 1947, pp 107, 108.

brought face to face with powerful vested interests which did not allow him to have his own way in this matter of essential reform. 'Will you believe,' he wrote with evident anger, 'that the boys of the service are the sovereigns of the country, under the unmeaning title of supervisors, collectors of the revenue, administrators of justice and rulers, heavy rulers, of the people?' Nevertheless, he continued to wield the broom and the pruning knife to the extent permitted to a 'commoner'. He reduced the Nawab's expenditure and put the young figurehead under the protection of a competent woman, Mani Begam, while the management of his household affairs was entrusted to Raja Gurudas, son of Maharaja Nanda Kumar. Mohamed Reza Khan, Clive's nominee, was dismissed from his office as the Nawab's Chief Minister, as well as his deputy, Sitab Rai, who had held charge of Bihar.

Bengal's prosperity could be restored only by reclaiming the wastelands and by reviving the fertility of the soil. Hastings knew that this goal could not be realised unless there was an equitable settlement of the land revenue. He was anxious to give a fair deal to the peasants and the zamindars alike by relating the assessment to the fertility of the soil and by assuring a reasonable payment to the zamindars. But such an arrangement pre-supposed the existence of a large body of trained personnel of proved integrity, willing to endure the hardships of country life. Hastings was in fact aiming at an ideal which eluded even the ablest members of that famous and capable *corps d'elite*, the Indian Civil Service, many generations after him In 1772, a Committee of Circuit, with himself as President, was appointed to tour the province and grant leases, perferably to the zamindars. Not all of the landed gentry were, however, upright men and they were in fact 'an idle, ignorant, effete body, generally in the hands of unscrupulous servants'[8] Hastings was not versed in the complicated matters of land revenue and the

[8]Ramsbotham, R. B, *STUDIES IN THE LAND REVENUE HISTORY OF BENGAL* 1769-1787, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 3.

peremptory settlement by his Committee, though rectified later, caused considerable distress to the peasantry, while the revenue collections fell into heavy arrears.

The Committee of Circuit also established Courts of Justice in the province, readily endorsing the Governor's plea for the revival of the 'laws and forms established of old in the country, with no other variations than such as was necessary to give them their due effect, and such as the people understood and were likely to be pleased with'. Every district was given a civil and criminal court. The former was presided over by the Collector who was assisted by Indian revenue officers and by men versed in the Hindu Law. The criminal courts administered justice entirely according to Muslim law under the general supervision of the Collector.

While Hastings was making history in Bengal by his unostentatious but many-sided reforms, the Government of his country was unwittingly preparing schemes to curb the powers of the Governor by means of a new constitution for its British Indian possessions. The revelations of 1772 made the perpetuation of the *status quo* in these territories impossible. Those were the great crusading days on behalf of the common man. Rousseau, that impassioned defender of the rights of man, thundered ceaselessly against the usurpations of tyranny, while Jeremy Bentham declared: 'The end and aim of a legislator should be the *happiness* of the people.' Neither the British Parliament nor the British Government could remain indifferent to the welfare of their overseas subjects. But both were confronted with constitutional difficulties when seeking to define the relations of the Crown with the Company and its possessions Outright annexation of British India by expropriating the Company was not considered either desirable or feasible. The sanctity of property, to which could be subordinated even considerations of justice and equity, rendered any such course an act of spoliation. Moreover, the existence of the Great Moghul, however absurdly futile, made the introduction of the direct jurisdic-

tion of the British Government into India extremely undesirable. While the Company could, without much sacrifice of principle or prestige, acknowledge the Emperor as the overlord of its Indian provinces, any such submission by the Crown of England was unthinkable. It was, moreover, politic for the Government to remain in the background as a safeguard against provoking the jealousies of other European Powers over Britain's waxing overseas strength Partnership between the Company and the Crown in the government of India was, therefore, adopted as the proper course for avoiding constitutional and international complications. The Company was accordingly allowed to retain its possessions and trade monopoly, besides the power of patronage, but the Crown assumed a predominant position in all matters concerning the higher branches of government Patronage was to be exercised with the Crown's sanction.

The famous Regulating Act of 1773 thus symbolised the new concept of partnership between the Crown of England and the East India Company It was also the first essay in constitution-making for India by the British Parliament The statute created a Supreme Council in Bengal, which was vested with chief executive authority over the other two provinces of Bombay and Madras in matters concerning war and peace and external relations The Council consisted of a Governor-General and four Councillors, whose term of office was fixed for a period of five years. Handsome salaries were attached to their posts, the Governor-General receiving £25,000 a year, while the Councillors were paid £10,000 each. A Supreme Court was also established, consisting of a Chief Justice and three Judges The Crown could exercise effective control over the Indian administration by reserving to itself the right of appointing and recalling important officials. Its close association with the Indian affairs was ensured by the provision that copies of all important correspondence between the Directors and their officials in India should be submitted to the British Government.

This well-meant enactment was almost the cause of Hastings's undoing The Governor-General was not given special powers, for which Hastings had so earnestly pleaded. The anomaly of burdening him with responsibilities without granting him corresponding powers to shoulder them persisted. As before, the Governor-General was merely the presiding member of his Council, with the feeble additional power derived from the casting vote. Rightly did Hastings lament that he was given opponents instead of assistants Since all executive decisions depended on the majority vote of the Council, the Governor-General could be reduced to impotence by a hostile combination of his colleagues against him. It was Hastings's misfortune that 'his government was still the Governor-General *and* Council and not yet the Governor-General *in* Council'.

The trouble began when the three non-resident Councillors, who were the nominees of the Crown, arrived in Calcutta in October 1774 General Clavering was a choleric, peppery old soldier, not at all distinguished for his intellectual abilities, but he was an honest and upright man who wielded much influence with Lord North's Government. Being next in succession, he was deeply interested in hastening Hastings's early expulsion from his office. Colonel Monson was a colourless person, while Francis, the last of the opposing triumvirate, was the most intelligent and implacable of Hastings's rivals Suspected to be the author of the famous letters of Junius, Francis cherished personal ambitions without any sense of proportion 'I am now, I think,' he wrote, 'on the road to be Governor of Bengal, which I believe, is the first situation in the world attainable by a subject' Only Barwell, an old and experienced officer of the Company, stood steadfast by Hastings's side The opposition of the three men to the Governor-General was bitter and all-embracing and had all the sinister features of a vendetta. A lesser man than Hastings would have broken down and either resigned or yielded to them But this slightly-built

man, with his thin lips pursed with an inflexible determination never to surrender, carried on doggedly until time and the righteousness of his cause completely vindicated him. With the death of Monson in September 1776, the domination of the formidable trio came to an end.

The Regulating Act was equally defective in defining the functions of the Supreme Court. A judiciary manned by competent and impartial judges, is undoubtedly a great gain to good government since it can be trusted to exercise a salutary check on executive excesses. The Court at Calcutta would undoubtedly have served this purpose if its powers had been defined beyond doubt and if the category of 'British subjects', over whom it was called upon to exercise its jurisdiction, had not been allowed to lend itself to conflicting interpretations. Failure to delimit the Court's authority brought it into violent conflict with the Supreme Council, which not unreasonably complained that the Judges aimed at running a parallel government. Reproaching the Judges for their encroaching spirit, a document of 1781 says: 'They have subjected every zamindar in the country to their jurisdiction. They have granted writs of ejectment against persons who have bought estates by order of the Governor-General and Council. They have ordered a writ of *habeas corpus* against the Naib Subha and would have executed it had not Mr. H(astings), to avoid the consequences of such a measure, entreated the Chief Justice to suspend the execution of the writ.'[9] The collision between the Council and the Court reached scandalous proportions, threatening the life-long friendship between Hastings and Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice Impey complained in May 1780 that he had been sacrificed to a union between Hastings and Francis. The Governor-General, however, succeeded in mollifying his friend by giving him powers to supervise the working of the District Courts. Though the product of a crisis, the reform was

[9]*WARREN HASTINGS'S LETTERS TO SIR JOHN MACPHERSON*, edited by Henry Dodwell, Faber & Gwyer, 1927, p. 72.

a salutary one since it established the paramountcy of the Supreme Court over all the Courts of Judicature in the province.

Hastings was neither a pacifist nor a war-monger. He did not believe in territorial expansion since the dominion already acquired by England in this country was large and populous enough to satisfy the pride and ambition of any conquering power Besides, even the most ardent administrator could find in the existing possessions ample scope for his reforming zeal. The ravages of war and famine and the maladministration of the Company had created mighty problems in Bengal, calling for long and sustained efforts to solve them Moreover, his masters were essentially concerned with profit and loss, and wars and new political entanglements involved grave financial drain and embarrassment. Nor was it prudent to enlarge the area of British rule in India until his countrymen had learnt the virtue of moderation, honesty and decent behaviour. He viewed with horror the prospect of a horde of European harpies descending upon the people of newly-conquered areas and fleecing them to starvation and death.

Hastings, therefore, made no deliberate attempt to disturb the territorial arrangement that existed when he became the Governor. The Company's possessions of Bengal and Bihar were effectively protected from external aggression by the outer wall furnished by the realm of the Nawab Vazier of Oudh The Nawab was a pliant and pleasant man who had the prudence to realise that his very security and survival depended upon his faithful observance of the Treaty of August 1765 which guaranteed to him the status of 'reciprocal friendship' with the Company Government. Oudh, like all the other principalities that acknowledged British supremacy, was a political curiosity, with its rulers reduced into helpless instruments of their protectors Lucknow, the Nawab's capital, seethed with unscrupulous foreigners who systematically despoiled both the ruler and his subjects. Writing to John Macpherson,

Hastings complained: 'Lucknow was a sink of iniquity. It was the school of rapacity. What will you say of beardless boys rejecting with indignation the offer of monthly gratuities of 3,000 and 5,000 rupees? What will you think of clerks in office clamouring for principalities, threatening those who hesitated to gratify their wants with vengeance of patronage, and in the confidence of exhaustless resources, gambling away two lakhs of rupees at a sitting, and grumbling that their wants are not attended to? What will you think of men receiving the wages of service from the Nawab, and disclaiming his right to command; and what of a city filled with as many independent absolute sovereignties as there are Englishmen in it?' This detailed quotation vividly portrays both the plight and the political status of a state whose rulers were in later years instigated to dignify themselves with the title of king!

In 1771, Shah Alam, the phantom Moghul Emperor, who had been gratuitously given two districts and a pension by Clive to sustain himself and his faded glory, chose to return to his capital under the protection of the Maratha soldier-statesman, Mahadji Sindhia. Hastings welcomed the exit of the expensive man and at once stopped the payment of the annual tribute of twenty-six lakhs of rupees to him besides annexing the districts of Korah and Allahabad, which were returned to the previous owner, the Nawab of Oudh, who received them gratefully after paying fifty lakhs of rupees to the Company.

In spite of his own feebleness and abject subordination to the British, Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab, cherished grandiose projects of conquest and expansion. He had long coveted the fertile territory of the Rohillas, a tribe of Afghan adventurers, who had gained possession of the rich tract that runs along the base of the Himalayas from the river Ganga eastward upto the confines of Oudh. The foreigners had succeeded in establishing their sway over the indigenous population, numbering some six millions, whose labour they ruthlessly exploited for their own

glory and gratification. They were 'naturally turbulent, treacherous, cruel and warlike' and it was said of them that 'they pray with one hand and rob with the other'.[10] These treacherous and truculent men had incurred the enmity of the Marathas by making common cause with the Afghan invaders in the famous Battle of Panipat in 1761. The southern highlanders frequently invaded the Rohilla territory to teach its rulers how misguided they were in supporting a wrong cause. Hafiz Rahmat Khan, the Rohilla chief, was no match for the Marathas and entered into a compact with the Nawab of Oudh, by which he agreed to pay the Nawab forty lakhs of rupees for military assistance against the invaders.

In 1773, the Marathas marched towards Rohilkhand as expected, and the Nawab's army, assisted by British troops, advanced to meet them. Distracted by the political troubles in Poona, the Maratha army withdrew, but the fact that no battle was fought did not deter the Nawab from making his claims on Rahmat Khan. The Rohilla chief hummed and hawed, prevaricated and paid nothing, thus unwittingly playing into the hands of Shuja-ud-daula. The Nawab applied to Hastings for military assistance to enforce his demand and offered a reward of forty lakhs of rupees for the service. The Company was not directly or indirectly concerned with the quarrel between the two Muslim princes, but the temptation to win the princely sum was irresistible. Hastings stilled his conscience by inventing the excuse that the annexation of Rohilkhand by Oudh would make it possible to form 'a complete compact state shut in effectually from foreign invasions.' In April 1774, the British and the Nawab engaged the Rohillas in a brief but bloody battle which ended in the death of Rahmat Khan and two thousand of his brave followers. Hastings's enemies in the Supreme Council made political capital out of the episode and, besides ordering the recall of

[10] *SELECTIONS FROM THE STATE PAPERS OF THE GOVERNORS-GENERAL OF INDIA: WARREN HASTINGS*, edited by G. W Forrest, B H Blackwell, Oxford, 1910 Vol 1, p. 67

the British Resident, Nathaniel Middleton, from the Court of Oudh, demanded that the correspondence between him and the Governor-General should be placed on the table of the Council Hastings's refusal to disclose the entire correspondence on the ground that parts of it were secret and personal, further deepened the majority's suspicions about his *bona fides* in the Rohilla transaction. Middleton's recall, however, deeply distressed the Nawab because 'it must have been sad for him to think that when he had expended so much in bribes, he would have to begin that process again!' Beveridge, the author of this observation, adds: 'It has generally been supposed that Hastings suppressed the correspondence with Middleton because it would have convicted him of bribery.'[11]

Even more cynical were Hastings's attempts to bring about the ruin of the only surviving Rohilla prince, the Nawab of Rampur. Faizullah Khan had entered into subordinate relations with the Nawab of Oudh, promising not to retain more than five thousand troops and to 'send two or three thousand men according to his ability' to the aid of his suzerain in the event of war. Faizullah was a clever man who knew the worthlessness of his compact with Oudh unless he cultivated at the same time the goodwill of the mighty Company Government. He accordingly volunteered to lend two thousand horse when the British became involved in the wars against Haidar Ali of Mysore and the Marathas But his gesture failed to win the favour of Hastings who asked the Nawab of Oudh to call upon Faizullah to furnish 'the quota of troops stipulated by treaty ....being five thousand horse.' The Rampur chief protested that the treaty countenanced no such exorbitant demand which was later modified to 'three thousand cavalry'. Faizullah still maintained his ground, asserting that his obligations did not go beyond supplying 'two or three thousand men'. Thereupon Hastings directed the Nawab to seize Faizullah's principality. In reporting the episode

[11]Beveridge H, *THE TRIAL OF MAHARAJA NANDA KUMAR,* Thacker Spink, 1886, p 109

to his Council, he completely distorted the facts and complained that 'the conduct of Faizullah Khan, in refusing the aid demanded, though not absolute breach of treaty, was evasive and uncandid'. Rampur escaped annexation, thanks to the timely intervention of the Directors. *The Cambridge History of India* judiciously sums up the issue: 'Even at this distance of time the thought that a British administrator could have written such words arouses a flush of shame and it may safely be surmised that such a justification for charging a ruler with disaffection has never been offered before or since.'

A man of great discernment, a lover of mankind and a devoted friend of the poor, Hastings, who was in every way an Olympian, inexplicably developed certain forbidding traits during his official career which brought him much misery during his lifetime and obloquy after his death. He became increasingly intolerant of criticism and pursued some of his opponents with primeval ferocity. Maharaja Nanda Kumar was a distinguished Indian nobleman of Bengal who enjoyed great influence and prestige both with the public and the ruling dynasty. In what circumstances this man came into conflict with Hastings is not clear, but the enmity between the two grew with years. Macaulay rightly observes that, widely as they differed on most points, 'they resembled each other in this, that both were men of unforgiving natures'. Asked by Nanda Kumar to be introduced to the new members of the Council when they arrived in Calcutta in October 1774, Hastings brusquely rejected the request, adding: 'I shall pursue what is for my own advantage, but in this your hurt is included; look to it'—an outburst which impelled the Indian nobleman 'to accuse Hastings, seeing that the latter had become his enemy'.[12]

In a complaint, dated March 11, 1775, placed before the Board through Francis, Nanda Kumar indicted Hastings on two counts. He alleged that, although Mohamed Reza

[12]Beveridge H., *THE TRIAL OF MAHARAJA NANDA KUMAR*, Thacker Spink, 1886, p. 103

Khan, the Nawab's dismissed prime minister, had misappropriated upwards of 305 lakhs of rupees and his deputy, Sitab Rai, had been guilty of a similar offence, they were not brought to book by the Governor because they bribed him. The second charge was even more specific. He claimed that at various times in 1772, Hastings had received more than three lakhs of rupees both from him and Mani Begam, 'for procuring Raja Guru Das's appointment to the *Niabut* and causing Mani Begam to be made the superior of the family.'[13] Many years later, after the Indian nobleman had been executed, Hastings admitted that he had received 1½ lakhs of rupees out of 3½ lakhs which Nanda Kumar had accused him of having taken, explaining that the amount was only a fair sumptuary allowance. Nanda Kumar was an important man with vast vested interests, and it required great courage on his part to call into question the integrity of the head of the powerful Company Government The controversy would probably have ended honourably to both the opponents if Hastings had chosen to meet the charges frankly. Sir James Stephen, a staunch defender of Hastings, concedes that the Governor-General's 'character would no doubt have stood better if he had boldly taxed Nanda Kumar with falsehood'[14]

Hastings failed to adopt this bold and straightforward course. He sought to implicate his enemy, through the reluctant instrumentality of a small man, on issues wholly irrelevant to the main dispute. No less irrelevant was the charge of forgery which ended in the Maharaja's execution One Mohan Prasad, Nanda Kumar's mortal enemy, was persuaded to resurrect a thirteen-year old transaction in an attempt to 'prove' his guilt when the witnesses to the bond, alleged to have been forged by him, were dead. The behaviour of Impey, the Chief Justice, in this sordid

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[13]Forrest, G. W., *THE ADMINISTRATION OF WARREN HASTINGS, 1772-1785*, Government Printing, India, Calcutta, 1892, p. 92.

[14]Stephen, Sir James Fitzjames, *THE STORY OF NUNCOMAR AND THE IMPEACHMENT OF SIR ELIJAH IMPEY*, Macmillan, 1885, p 72

episode was amazingly unjudicial. Impey was a small and by no means an upright man His partiality for unearned money was notorious. He was, says Macaulay, the most 'serviceable tool' of Hastings and, in the forgery case, allowed himself to be dictated to by the consideration 'to gratify the Governor-General' Another eminent authority says that Impey was 'by no means a specially interesting person.' In fact, he was 'in all ways a far smaller man than Hastings.'[15] The trial of Nanda Kumar bristled with irregularities. His plea to be tried by his peers was rejected. In India forgery was not an offence punishable with death. 'The law,' declares Macaulay, 'which made forgery capital punishment in England was passed without the slightest reference to the state of the society in India. It was unknown to the natives of India. It had never been put in execution among them, certainly not for want of delinquents.'[16] If Impey had agreed with his colleague, Sir Robert Chambers, the trial of Nanda Kumar for forgery under the Statute of George II would not have taken place at all Lastly, the application of the accused for leave to appeal was summarily rejected and when his advocate petitioned for respite of sentence, he only elicited the stern rebuke of Impey 'who was offended at Nanda Kumar being described as an unhappy victim.'[17] Thirteen years after accomplishing the destruction of his enemy who, incidentally, met his doom like a brave man, Hastings admitted that he was 'never the personal enemy of any man but Nanda Kumar, whom from my soul I detested even when I was compelled to countenance him.' The reason for his aversion will perhaps never be known, but the explanation that the Maharaja knew so much about the unrecorded part of Hastings's activities as to endanger both the office and the reputation of the Governor-General

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[15]Stephen, Sir James Fitzjames, *THE STORY OF NUNCOMAR AND THE IMPEACHMENT OF SIR ELIJAH IMPEY*, Macmillan, 1885, pp. 34, 35

[16]*THE WORKS OF LORD MACAULAY: ESSAYS & BIOGRAPHIES*, Vol III, pp 450-51

[17]Lyall, Sir Alfred, *WARREN HASTINGS*, Macmillan, 1889, pp 66, 67.

may not be far-fetched. The Nanda Kumar episode furnished an outstanding instance of the strong condescending to destroy the weak by due process of law; and, as Clavering observed, after the Maharaja's death, the Governor-General was 'well assured that no man who regards his own safety will venture to stand forth as his accuser.'

Hastings showed a similar ferocity of temper in his dealings with Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras The status of this man in his relations with the Company Government was not clearly defined in any of the treaties concluded with him, but whether he was a prince in his own right, or a mere tributary, he was certainly entitled to just and humane treatment at the hands of the Governor-General. The Raja's supposed crime was that he had ventured to send a message of congratulations to Clavering as Hastings' successor when the latter had tentatively tendered his resignation to his office. His behaviour at the worst was indiscreet, but Hastings condemned it as 'indecent with respect to my office, unjustifiable with regard to his situation, and a proof of his rooted disaffection to the English administration.' After all, the story of the lamb and the wolf is not entirely fictitious!

The Company Government's growing financial embarrassments, resulting from the war with the Marathas and the opening of hostilities with France in 1778, gave Hastings an opportunity to demand heavy reparations from Chait Singh for offending his *amour propre*. In the name of war effort, he levied on the Raja an annual payment of five lakhs of rupees in addition to the stipulated yearly tribute of 22½ lakhs Being helpless, the prince dutifully but reluctantly paid the impost. His loyalty to the British was disconcertingly steady and in an attempt to weaken it, Hastings demanded in 1780, on the same day that the last instalment of the additional levy was paid, that Banaras should provide the Company with two thousand cavalry. Obviously, it was an arbitrary and unjust demand since the Treaty of 1775 had merely recommended that Chait Singh should maintain a body of that number of horse,

with the assurance that there would be 'no obligation on him to do it.' The Raja's expostulations induced the Governor-General to reduce the military assistance to one thousand horse, but as even this was beyond his resources, he mustered five hundred horse and five hundred infantry and asked for instructions about their despatch. As acknowledged by him later, Hastings sent no reply to the Raja.

The Governor-General had now made up his mind to chastise Chait Singh and had in fact confided to Wheler, his colleague in the Council, before leaving for Banaras in July 1781 that he intended to exact a fine of 'forty or fifty' lakhs from the Raja. Chait Singh waited on the Governor-General at Buxar and, as an act of loyalty and submission, placed his turban in the lap of his political superior—a gesture that ought to have mollified and conciliated even the most stubborn and haughty person. Hastings was, however, unmoved and added insult to injury by ordering the house-arrest of the Raja in his own capital, Banaras,—a rude and foolish act which infuriated both the retainers and the subjects of Chait Singh, leading to some violence and bloodshed. The Raja fled to Gwalior to escape the vengeance of Hastings, who put Chait Singh's nephew, on the vacant *gadi* and raised the annual tribute of Banaras from 22½ lakhs to forty lakhs. His exactions were directly responsible for the ruin of the principality—a charge that was later confirmed by authoritative official reports. Hastings's behaviour towards Chait Singh was indeed 'merciless and vindictive,' while his unlimited financial claims on Banaras were clearly unconstitutional since the 'tribute fixed in 1775 was a definite regulation of that right.' As in the Nanda Kumar case, the Governor-General grossly misused his power and thus invited an indelible stain upon his character.

The spoliation of the Begams of Oudh is yet another dark episode in Hastings's career. The Nawab, Shuja-ud-daula, was a fine and courtly gentleman but totally destitute of talent to govern well The expense of maintaining the Company's army in his realm, the cupidity and the exac-

tions of the British Resident and his compatriots, and the corruption and the ineptitude of his government, had all contributed to reducing the finances of the state to chronic disorder. The accession of his son, Asaf-ud-daula, an expensive eccentric, whose life, in the words of Macaulay, was 'divided between torpid repose and the most odious forms of sensuality,' brought even greater distress to the finances of Oudh With a candour most disconcerting to the Calcutta Government, the new Nawab announced his inability to discharge his debts to the Company. Hastings, who knew that the late ruler had left behind a private fortune of two million pounds, was, however, not unduly perturbed by Asaf-ud-daula's announcement of insolvency. The wealth, secreted in the palace at Fyzabad, was in the possession of the Nawab's mother and grandmother, who, apart from doling out from time to time moderate sums to the chronically impecunious man, firmly refused to part with it on any account. Despite his depravity, the Nawab was not anxious to take the treasure by force for fear of inviting the anger and the curse of the ladies.

Hastings had, however, no such scruples In 1781, he had received ten lakhs from the Nawab promising not to demand the coercion of the Begams In the previous year, by giving a similar assurance, he had taken a present of two lakhs from Chait Singh. The Governor-General's critics have maintained that he would perhaps have pocketed both these amounts if circumstances and his own courage had permitted him to do so In any case, the Oudh proceeding was entirely screened from his Council—a thoroughly unconstitutional act—and was belatedly reported to the Directors after 'some amazing manipulation of accounts'[18] Later, brushing aside all considerations of prestige and honour, he asked his masters to restore the amount to him as a token of their appreciation of his services, although his official emoluments approximated to thirty thousand pounds a year. In the candid words

[18]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA,* Vol V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, pp 302, 303.

of Keith, Hastings, like Clive, was 'below any decent standard of honesty,' although he was not as grossly rapacious as the other man and as most of his countrymen were. Apart from the moral aspect of the case, the ladies had earned the right to retain their riches by a solemn agreement with the British Resident, Bristow, who, in the role of an arbitrator, had persuaded them to surrender half a million pounds in return for a full acquittal as to the rest of the treasure. The arrangement had been guaranteed by the majority of the Calcutta Council and yet the treasure was forcibly taken away from the helpless ladies Hastings invented the absurd fiction that, as the Begams had been in league with Chait Singh, the Raja of Banaras, they deserved no protection from his Government. History has categorically rejected this specious excuse.

Hastings, however, proved himself a true statesman and a resourceful war leader when the British possessions in India were exposed to danger. The Government of Madras was controlled by corrupt and incompetent men who unashamedly subordinated their official responsibilities to personal gains. In Bengal, the foreigners made their fortunes by aggrandizing the trade of the province, while in the southern presidency, their counterparts enriched themselves by dipping their hands into the capacious and bottomless pockets of Mahomed Ali, the Nawab of Carnatic. Mahomed Ali was a consummate villain who managed to retain full powers of misrule by instituting an elaborate system of bribe-giving, his beneficiaries being such supposedly honest and honourable men as the Directors of the East India Company and Members of British Parliament. Pigot, the Governor of Madras, alone received as much as £1,200,000 in nineteen years. Paul Benfield, a daring British adventurer, whose influence and wealth were only matched by his unscrupulousness, became the *alter ego* of the Nawab, from whom he netted as much as £500,000. He was contemptuously described as 'Count Rupee' by his countrymen and like Clive, he eventually came to a miserable end. Benfield became Mohamed Ali's

self-appointed banker and obligingly procured for him loans at rates of interest ranging from 36 to 48 per cent! The Nawab's recklessness was notorious and to relieve him of his chronic financial difficulties, Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control for India in Pitt's Cabinet, 'obligingly put through Parliament a resolution charging Mohamed Ali's debts, amounting to five million pounds, to the depleted revenues of a ruined country, without any inconvenient examination into their history'.[19]

Such was the unedifying spectacle presented by the Government of Madras when it rashly invited a conflict with Haidar Ali, the formidable ruler of Mysore. On the outbreak of war with France, the Madras authorities, foolishly ignoring Haidar Ali's stern warning, trespassed into his territories twice in order to open hostilities against their French adversaries in India. Thereupon, with a large and well-appointed army, Haidar descended upon Carnatic like a tornado, carrying everything before him. The detachment of Colonel Baillie was overwhelmed and annihilated; Sir Hector Munro, the hero of Buxar, who was in command of the Company's army, was shaken by the disaster and, throwing his guns and stores into a tank, fled in panic to Madras. In its extremity, the Madras Government applied to Calcutta for assistance. The news of the southern debacle reached Hastings in September 1780. 'The crisis,' he said, 'demanded the most instant, powerful and even hazardous exertion of this Government.' Fortunately, for the British, the Governor-General was endowed with a natural capacity for dominating the most complex situations. He succeeded in persuading Sir Eyre Coote, the veteran soldier, then his colleague in the Calcutta Council, to return to the scene of his glory to relieve the dangerous situation. Despite his physical unfitness, Coote patriotically responded to the call of duty and saved the British in South India from a desperate

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[19]Davies, A Mervyn *WARREN HASTINGS. MAKER OF BRITISH INDIA*, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935, p. 341.

predicament. In the Battle of Porto Novo, fought on July 1, 1781, he defeated the Mysore army after a severe engagement and repeated that performance in another battle on August 27. One month later, he won a bigger victory, thus neutralising the defeat of Braithwaite's corps at Tanjore. Haidar now clearly saw the tide of war turning against him and even the exertions of Bussy, the renowned French soldier, now but a pale shadow of his former self, on his behalf proved futile. Coote's great victory at Arni in June 1782 no longer left any doubt in the mind of the Mysore ruler about the superior military power of his opponents.

Haidar died on December 7, 1782. He was an extraordinary man who, by his own exertions, had lifted himself from obscurity and won an honoured place in history. War was his element, but he was never guilty of cruelty. Reverend W. Schwartz, who was sent to him in 1779 on behalf of the English as a peace-maker, has left a vivid and appreciative pen-picture of Haidar's ability and industry. Haidar was an unlettered man, but no religious prejudices sullied the catholicity of his mind. 'It was,' says Wilks, the historian, 'his avowed and public opinion that all religions proceed from God and all are equal in the sight of God; and it is certain that the mediatory power represented by Rangaswami, the great idol in the temple of Seringapatam, had as much, if not more, of his respect than all the Imams, with Mohammed at their head.' In an intimate conversation with his trusted minister, Purniah, who later narrated it to Wilks, Haidar admitted the folly of his war with the British. 'I might have,' he said, 'made them my friends instead of Mohamed Ali, the most treacherous of men.' Before his death, he admonished his son, Tipu, to cultivate the alliance of the foreign islanders, but knowing the temper of the young man, he 'uniformly, earnestly and broadly' predicted that Tipu would 'lose the empire which he himself had gained'. The war-weary contestants concluded a treaty in March 1784, despite Hastings's instructions to the subordinate Govern-

ment to the contrary It was a drawn tournament, but in the subsequent encounters, Tipu, who shared few of his father's estimable qualities except his courage and valour, lost both his life and his kingdom.

The war against the Marathas in Western India was also precipitated by the foolish miscalculation of the local British authorities. Gambier, the President of the Bombay Council, was a vain-glorious man, whose vaulting ambitions unfolded before him a vista of wars, victories, new territories for his nation and undying fame for himself! But he failed to realise that the Marathas, despite the decline in their fortunes, were not a spineless people who could be easily subdued by fighting a few *gymkhana* wars. Gambier arbitrarily intervened in their domestic quarrels by upholding the pretensions of Raghunathrao or Raghoba, as he was more widely known, to the Peshwaship. Raghoba, who applied to the Bombay Council in 1774 for armed assistance in pursuit of his traitorous designs, possessed a character that was both estimable and despicable He was a great soldier who won renown for his people by carrying Maratha arms as far as Attock in the Punjab But he was burdened with a weak and vacillating mind, over which his crafty and ambitious wife, Anandibai, a woman of great beauty, had established her complete ascendancy. She succeeded in stimulating in him the lust for power and at her instigation he is believed to have contrived the assassination of Narayanrao in 1773 in the hope of elevating himself to the vacant Peshwaship. Reckless of the consequences, he signed a treaty with the British on March 6, 1775, ceding Bassein, the island of Salsette and other islands on the Bombay coast, which the Company Government had long but unsuccessfully attempted to annex.

This political transaction, besides exposing the despicable character of Raghoba, who was heartily detested by his people, proved the insolence and the aggressiveness of the Bombay Government. Hastings, without whose knowledge the treaty had been signed, was naturally furious,

for, apart from infringing considerations of propriety and prudence, it grossly violated the provisions of the statute of 1773. The consent of the Supreme Council at Calcutta was necessary for such an important political arrangement. Hastings rightly characterised the Bombay proceedings as 'unseasonable, impolitic, unjust and unauthorised'—a point of view that was suprisingly endorsed by the majority of his Council. The treaty of 1775 was accordingly abrogated and another, known as the Treaty of Purandhar, was concluded on March 1, 1776. The new compact established peace between the two powers and dissolved the hateful alliance between Raghoba and the English. In a desperate gamble to secure the continued adhesion of the foreigners to his cause, Raghoba offered to cede to them the whole of Konkan and ten per cent. of all the jagirs of the Maratha Empire![20]

The understanding between Poona and Calcutta was, however, short-lived Nana Phadanvis, the great statesman who guided the affairs of the Maratha Government at this crucial period, had no illusions about the British policy towards his people. He had correctly assessed both the character and the calibre of the foreigners and was convinced that friendly relations could be established with them only from a position of strength. The arrival of a French adventurer, Chevalier St. Lubin, in Poona early in 1777 caused needless fright to Hastings who, in total disregard of the realities of the situation, imagined that a formidable Maratha-French combination was being planned to expel the British from India. The astute Nana Phadanvis, chuckling inwardly at the Governor-General's groundless fears, did nothing to assuage them since the Lubin episode served as an appropriate counterblast to the British intrigue with Raghoba.

The irrepressible renegade signed another treaty with the English on November 24, 1778, promising to cede the

[20]Aitchison, Sir Charles, *A COLLECTION OF TREATIES, ENGAGEMENTS AND SANADS* Vol VI, Government of India, Calcutta, 1909, pp. 3-6

territories detailed in the infructuous agreement of 1775 in return for assisting him to usurp the Poona *gadi*. The Company's troops, which marched from Bombay in a foolish attempt to capture the capital of the Maratha Empire, were soundly beaten and were forced to sign the ignominious Convention of Wadgaon on January 11, 1779, which was however, promptly repudiated by the Bombay government. Fresh negotiations were initiated by Colonel Goddard, but no progress could be made towards a settlement since the English refused to surrender Salsette and Raghoba to the Marathas as preliminaries to a new agreement. Nana Phadanvis made repeated but futile attempts to unite the Maratha confederacy in a common effort to teach the foreigners a memorable lesson about the unwisdom of intervening in the affairs of other sovereign states and to secure the adhesion of Haidar Ali to the common cause. In his letter of February 7, 1780, he apprised the ruler of Mysore of British policy thus: 'They (the British) are bent upon subjugating the states of Poona, Nagpur, Mysore and Hyderabad one by one, by enlisting the sympathy of one to put down the others.' He addressed a similar warning to Mahadji Sindhia. The Marathas, he pointed out, had done nothing to hurt the English and yet ceaseless efforts were being made to destroy their unity. 'If we,' wrote the great statesman, 'let them act as they wish, we shall only bring calamity on ourselves and subvert our empire.'[21] But unity of purpose and action was always a lost cause in India.

Hastings was unnerved at the prospect of a combination betweeen the Marathas and Haidar Ali and sent frantic directives to his envoy, Anderson, asking him to come to a settlement with the Poona government at any price. 'It is not peace,' he declared, 'with conditions of advantage that we want, but a speedy peace.' He would, he said, rather purchase it with the sacrifice of every foot of ground that had been gained from the Marathas. He

[21]Kincaid, C A. and Parasnis, D. B, *A HISTORY OF THE MARATHA PEOPLE*, Vol II, Humphrey Milford, 1918, p. 141.

added: 'I am afraid of nothing but delay.'[22] The shrewd Nana Phadanvis was content to let the events take their own course, knowing that that way lay the best interests of his people.[23] But Mahadji Sindhia thought otherwise and, thanks to his importunities and good offices, the Treaty of Salbye was signed on May 17, 1782. Perhaps, the only redeeming feature of the unwanted agreement was that Raghoba was permanently excluded from the government of the Maratha Empire. The traitor belatedly realised that his value to the British had always been that of a tool and that by intriguing with them he had rendered the greatest disservice to his own people. He died soon after the signing of the Treaty of Salbye, thus ending a truly distinguished career in disgrace and obloquy.

The crisis of war revealed the real measure of Hastings's greatness. By an adroit exercise of diplomacy, he succeeded in preventing a possible coalition of the most powerful Indian states against the British. Undaunted by the smallness of the Company's armies and the paucity of resources, he waged war against Haidar to the bitter end and against the Marathas till he could gain advantageous terms from them. He infused his own indomitable courage and sense of high purpose into his officers and men, no matter from what distance they operated. He was quite right in claiming that he was the real architect of British victory in the war against Mysore and Poona. To gain this supreme goal, he, however, despised the distinction between ends and means, thereby inviting condemnation for his unscrupulous behaviour in the episodes described in the previous pages.

Hastings wronged many people in India, but the common man was not among the aggrieved. He bore deep and sincere affection for the country and its inhabitants. They were, he said, 'gentle, benevolent and more suscep-

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[22]Davies, A Mervyn, *WARREN HASTINGS: MAKER OF BRITISH INDIA*, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935, p 355.

[23]*WARREN HASTINGS'S LETTERS TO SIR JOHN MACPHERSON*, edited by Henry Dodwell, Faber & Gwyer, 1927, (pp XXVI, XXVII).

tible of gratitude for kindness shown them than prompt to vengeance for wrongs sustained' and recognised that there were among them 'men of as strong intellect, as sound integrity, and as honourable feelings, as any of this kingdom.' This remarkable man realised, even as he was laying the foundations of British rule in India, that cordial and abiding relations could be established between the two countries, not by subjecting the one to the imperious will of the other, but only by promoting a genuine understanding of the greatness of each country. He stated it as his cardinal belief that wise and efficient government by Britain in India would be possible only on the basis of an intimate knowledge of Indian life and civilization. He gave signal proofs of his greatness in these noble words: 'Every instance which brings their real character home to observation will impress us with a more generous feeling for their natural rights, and teach us to estimate them by the measure of our own. But such instances can only be obtained in their writings: and these will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.'

To promote such enlightened understanding between the two countries and to leave behind enduring monuments of British connection with India, the Governor-General gathered around him an enthusiastic band of Orientalists whose labour and scholarship succeeded in placing before the world the almost forgotten treasures of Indian thought enshrined in the religious, philosophical and secular literature of the country. Nathaniel Halhed undertook the mighty task of rendering the Hindu Code into English when he was barely twenty-three years old and completed his labours in 1776, winning the plaudits of competent men for his scholarship and application. He was among the pioneers of modern philology and called public attention to the affinity between the Sanskrit words and those of Persian, Arabic, Latin and Greek, although this closeness had been independently detected earlier

by French Jesuits[24] Halhed also published in 1778 a grammar of Bengali. He set up a printing press at Hooghly, in which enterprise he was assisted by another literary stalwart, Charles (afterwards Sir Charles) Wilkins, whom he described as 'metallurgist, engraver, founder and printer' of such widely different alphabets as Bengali and Persian.

A versatile man, Wilkins, has laid India under a deep debt of gratitude by his scholarly contribution to Indian studies. He translated the Bhagvad Gita or Song Celestial, which is ranked among the greatest treatises on philosophy.[25] He was the first European to decipher the Sanskrit inscriptions that had defied and baffled the most eminent pandits of his days,[26] and his brilliant example was followed by a succession of scholarly Englishmen, one of whom, James Prinsep, succeeded in unlocking the secrets of the Brahmi script which opened the way for the collection of much useful historical material about the Mauryan Empire. The massive industry of Wilkins, and more especially his astonishing mastery of Sanskrit, won the unstinted admiration of Sir William Jones, who generously conceded that without Wilkins's pioneering labours, he would never have learnt the classical language of India.

Henry Colebrooke was another distinguished Indologist who translated the Hindu Law after studying it at the source, thus rendering the Code much more authentic and authoritative than Halhed's earlier rendering based on the Persian text. Colebrooke's essay on the *Vedas*, 'the first authentic account' of India's oldest scriptures, won the admiration of H. H. Wilson, who wrote in 1837: 'It must

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[24] *DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY*, edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, Smith, Elder, 1890, Vol. XXIV, p 41.

[25] Hastings wrote an enthusiastic introduction to the translation, declaring that the *Gita* contained passages "elevated to a track of sublimity into which our habits of judgment will find it difficult to pursue them" He described the *Gita* as a "performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost, unequalled. . ."

[26] *DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY*, edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, Smith, Elder, 1890, Vol LXI, p 260.

have been a work of great labour and could have been executed by no one except himself.'[27]

William Jones belongs to a class by himself. No ordinary standard of appraisal can apply to this man's attainments The ten years he spent in India, from December 1783 till his death in April 1794, were memorable both for his industry and his achievements. He came to India with the earnestness of a seeker after truth and instituted a search into the country's ancient heritage with such diligence and perspicacity that his labours won for him both fame and gratitude from students of Indian thought. He was indeed a 'prodigy of learning' and his knowledge of Sanskrit was believed to be unrivalled. He knew thirteen languages thoroughly and twenty-eight fairly well! His rendering of Kalidasa's immortal drama *Shakuntala* and of *Hitopadesha* is in itself a work of great excellence and his six ponderous volumes on the religion and philosophy of this country bear eloquent testimony to his towering scholarship. Also an eminent jurist, it was Jones's ambition 'to be the Justinian of India.' With Hastings's encouragement and with Halhed and Wilkins among the co-founders, he established the Bengal Asiatic Society in January 1784 and became its first President.

Much of the credit for stimulating such creative activities that did so much to retrieve India's past from oblivion must go to Hastings. He showed equal interest in the Islamic culture and founded the Muslim *Madrasah* of Arabic studies at Calcutta in 1781. He cherished the ambition of making Bengal India's most prosperous province by giving encouragement to fruitful commercial and industrial enterprises. He attempted to open up new trade with Tibet and China and sent Bogle as his envoy to meet the Grand Lama. Major Renell was encouraged to produce his memorable *Bengal Atlas* in 1781 and win fame as the father of Indian geography. Hastings was, in the words of Lord Curzon, 'almost the only one in the long

[27]*DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY*, edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, Smith, Elder, 1887, Vol. XI, p 284.

list of the British rulers of India who took a real interest in literature, scholarship and the arts'.[28]

And yet his services in India, far more substantial than spectacular, failed to win the appreciation of the men that mattered in his own country. On retirement, he was impeached before Parliament for his official mistakes and misdemeanours. At the most, he deserved a public rebuke or reprimand, but the proceedings instituted against him degenerated into an unmitigated persecution. Men like Burke, Sheridan and Fox trained the mighty artillery of their eloquence upon the fragile old man, urging their case with a passion that amounted to frenzy. The crimes with which Hastings was arraigned were, thundered Burke, 'crimes which have their rise in the wicked dispositions of men .... in avarice, rapacity, pride, cruelty, ferocity, malignity of temper, haughtiness, insolence; in short, in everything that manifests a heart blackened to the very blackest—a heart dyed deep in blackness—a heart corrupted, vitiated and gangrened to the very core.' For seven long years—from February 1788 to April 1795—Hastings was fated to listen to such intemperate attacks on him until the trial ended with a vote of acquittal. The verdict of his successors, Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore, on his Indian administration not only vindicated him, but also proved that the charges brought against him were grossly exaggerated.

In spite of Hastings's undoubted greatness, few amosg his peers loved him In later years, he developed a personality that revealed a strange combination of perplexing contradictions. The corrupting influence of power affected his naturally humane disposition, but he never wavered in his esteem and affection for the Indian people. Summing up his term of office, the *Oxford History of India* says: 'He found Calcutta a counting-house and left it a seat of empire' This in itself is not a small achievement, but he accomplished much more. Both by personal exam-

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[28]Curzon, Lord, *BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN INDIA,* Vol II, Cassell, 1925, p 155.

ple and by patronage, he stimulated among the more discerning sections of his countrymen a deep and abiding interest in India and her civilization. Long after the lapses of the British rule are forgotten—and the process has already begun—the devoted labours of men like Warren Hastings in the cause of friendship and understanding between the two countries will be remembered with respect and gratitude.

2. *LORD WELLESLEY*

LORD Mornington, better known as Marquess Wellesley, who came to India in April 1798, was the fourth Governor-General and the first uninhibited British imperialist in this country. He was thirty-seven years of age and was in the full tide of his physical and mental vigour. A sound classical scholar, he commanded a forceful if grandiloquent style. He was immensely egoistical and disdained to share his eminence with others. In fact, he created an almost unsurpassed record as a self-opinionated pro-consul, whose outlook was governed by arrogance towards his equals and subordinates and by superciliousness towards his superiors. In intelligence, he was far superior to his more famous brother, Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, but he lacked the stolidity and the enduring qualities of the younger man He was endowed with a brilliant and ardent temperament, with which he combined an unlimited capacity for work, his regime in many ways anticipating for its vigour the memorable Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon Wellesley was an intimate friend of Pitt, Grenville and Dundas and had, as Wilks points out, 'the inestimable benefit of early friendship and confidential intercourse with the great statesmen who then directed in England the general interests of the empire.'

Wellesley came to India inspired with a sense of mission. The loss of the American colonies, which was a bitter drench for him and his class to swallow, lent a certain urgency to the need for carving out a new empire as much to rehabilitate the prestige and glory of England as to secure a perennial source of wealth for the enrichment of her economy. India, in her prostrate condition, ideally fulfilled the expectations of the British expansionists. 'I can declare,' said Wellesley, 'my conscientious conviction that no greater blessing can be conferred on the native inhabitants of India than the extension of British autho-

rity.' The regime of his immediate predecessor, Sir John Shore, whom he contemptuously dismissed as a man of 'low birth and vulgar manners,' was not marked by any outstanding events. But the lustrum of Lord Cornwallis, Warren Hastings's successor, was a milestone in the history of British India.

Notwithstanding his great abilities, labours and reforming zeal, Hastings had left behind an administration which, in the words of Malcolm, was 'corrupt and full of abuses.' It needed a man of great rectitude, courage and resolution to put an end to the growing corruption in the Company's rule. Cornwallis was endowed with these and many other estimable qualities. A man of upright character and of a disposition which neither victory nor defeat could ruffle, he retained the esteem and confidence of his countrymen in spite of his surrender to Washington at York Town in October 1781, which ended the American War of Independence. In a world seething with corruption and greed, his standard of probity in financial matters was so high that it 'probably transcended that of all other politicians of his day'.[1] Like Wellesley, he was on intimate terms with the leading statesmen of his country, including Pitt and Dundas, all of whom were convinced that he would be a true representative of British virtues, besides proving himself the most competent person to carry out the provisions of the India Act of 1784. The new statute, sponsored by Pitt, marked an important departure from the Regulating Act of 1773 because it gave the Governor-General the power to act independently of his Council whenever he considered such a course of action necessary. Cornwallis further strengthened his position by securing the amalgamation of the offices of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in his person.

The new Governor-General, whose first term of office lasted from 1786 to 1793, was confronted with heartbreaking obstacles when combating corruption and nepotism. Par-

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[1]Roberts, P. E., *HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA UNDER THE COMPANY AND THE CROWN*, Clarendon Press, 1938, p. 222.

liamentary government of his time was notoriously venal and men in position, including the Prince of Wales, blithely advanced the cause of their proteges in total disregard of all principles of decency. That unique Scot, Henry Dundas, who held the office of President of the Board of Control for many years, was the leader of such men. His countrymen found in him a great captain-general whose 'Indian and Scottish policies dovetailed very nicely into one another. He managed the Scottish vote at Westminster by the distribution of government patronage among Scots. As a result, Scotland lost all control of its own destinies, but British India enjoyed the priceless boon of government by Scotsmen.'[2] Dundas was a stern realist, who had no use for new provinces unless they offered an opening for additional investments and extended scope for jobbery and nepotism.

There was indeed a certain invincibility in the venality of the British in India. Even the fearless Cornwallis could not resist the rapacity of Burke's cousin.[3] A few examples of how large unearned fortunes were made by them in the early days of the Company Government may be given. To oblige his friend, Laurence Sullivan, Chairman of the Court of Directors, Warren Hastings gave his son, Stephen, a contract for the Bengal opium, a privilege which the young man sold for £40,000 to a friend who in his turn disposed it of for £60,000.[4] Clive, the 'hero' of Plassey, was reputed to have taken away from India one million pounds, with a well-known income of £45,000. Barwell, Hastings's colleague, was estimated to have made £80,000, while Francis admitted that in one night he won at the gambling table as much as £20,000. The actual size of the wealth amassed by him does not appear to have

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[2] Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T., *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1934, pp. 170, 171.

[3] *SELECTIONS FROM THE STATE PAPERS OF THE GOVERNORS-GENERAL OF INDIA: CORNWALLIS*, Vol I, Basil Blackwell, MCMXXVI, p 27

[4] Thomson, Edward and Garratt, G. T., *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p 164.

needed pretext. It has been claimed that Cornwallis, whose experience had accustomed his mind to world-wide maps and who had a wide-ranging knowledge of international politics, was perhaps the first British statesman in India to grasp the full significance of the position held by this country 'in the enduring rivalry between England and France'.[6] If an excuse for the destruction of Mysore was at all necessary, perhaps a more plausible one ought to have been invented, for, as we shall see presently, the French menace was in fact an over-worked myth.

The Governor-General left nothing to chance when he decided to attack Tipu. He concluded a military alliance with the Nizam and adroitly circumvented the statutory prohibitions against such compacts by reviving and reinterpreting the old treaty of 1768 which guaranteed the Company's armed assistance to Hyderabad. In addition, he gave a written promise to the Nizam's envoy that military aid would the furnished to his master provided it was not employed against the Company's allies, among whom the name of Tipu was conspicuously omitted—an engagement that 'tended rather to promote than prevent hostilities, since Tipu not unreasonably treated it as a preliminary to some direct movement against him'.[7] The Marathas, who had earlier been worsted and humiliated by Tipu, readily accepted the Governor-General's invitation to join the grand offensive against him Tipu, who was thus left high and dry, hated the British as no other Indian ruler had ever done and his revulsion had all the symptoms of an incurable malady He had little chance of success against the formidable coalition and after two years' struggle was forced in 1792 to sign a treaty by which he was mulcted of half his dominions which were shared by the victorious allies. An indemnity of 330 lakhs of rupees was exacted from him, while two of his sons were taken as hostages.

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[6] *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p 334

[7] Lyall, Sir Alfred, *THE RISE AND EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH DOMINION IN INDIA*, John Murray, 1907, p 222.

The terms of the treaty were undoubtedly harsh and almost vindictive and yet Cornwallis, whose conduct of the campaign was marked by a 'wide and searching humanity', was criticised for not exacting heavier reparations. It was believed by some of his contemporaries that his 'considerate' treatment of Tipu was influenced by the doctrine of counterpoise. Before the commencement of the hostilities, General Medows had written to Cornwallis on January 7, 1791, expressing his belief in the possibility of crushing Tipu, 'if it is not sounder politics only to cripple him'.[8] Munro, then still a young man, wrote on January 17, 1790: 'It has long been admitted as an axiom in politics by the directors of our affairs, both at home and in this country, that Tipu ought to be preserved as a barrier between us and the Marathas.'[9] Cornwallis himself summed up the results of the war against Tipu by declaring: 'We have effectually crippled our enemy, without making our friends too formidable'[10] It is perhaps not unfair to conclude from these reflections on the Mysore war that, although the policy of checks and balances had not yet been developed into an active principle of statecraft, it was not altogether absent from the minds of the British statesmen in India even of this period A man of fiery temperament, Tipu did not take his defeat with resignation, but submitted to it with flaming indignation, secretly determined to retrieve his fallen fortunes and to wreak a terrible vengeance upon the victors whenever the opportunity presented itself. But the blow was a smashing one and it made the task of Wellesley, who delivered the *coup d'grace*, much easier.

Cornwallis, whose contribution to the Indian administration was 'commonsense, a high sense of public duty and

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[8]*SELECTIONS FROM THE STATE PAPERS OF THE GOVERNORS-GENERAL OF INDIA: CORNWALLIS,* edited by Sir George Forrest, Vol. I, Basil Blackwell, MCMXXVI, p 27.

[9]Gleig, G. R, *THE LIFE OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR THOMAS MUNRO,* Vol. I, Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830, p 84

[10]Roberts, P. E, *HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA UNDER THE COMPANY AND THE CROWN,* Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 235.

to paroxysms of anger when the British terms were communicated to him and decided to retain at all costs his full rights of sovereignty and not allow himself to be relegated to the position of king in a pack of cards. The war came swiftly and, on May 4, 1799, this astonishing man, who was then only fortyseven years old, perished on the battlefield with sword in hand when defending his fortified capital of Srirangapattana (Seringapatam), where 8,000 of his men laid down their lives on that fateful day

For the British, the success was unexpectedly speedy and overwhelming. Naturally inclined to exaggeration, the Governor-General found in the event a splendid theme for rapturous writing. He told the Directors that the glory of the victory 'has never been surpassed (if it has ever been equalled), in the history of military transactions of the British nation in India'. What happened to the fair capital of Tipu after the British victory, was reported in vivid terms to the Governor-General by his brother, Arthur Wellesley. He said that nothing could have exceeded what was done on the night of the 4th. 'Scarcely a house,' he informed his brother, 'in the town was left unplundered, and I understand that in camp jewels of the greatest value, bars of gold etc. etc. have been offered for sale in the bazaars of the army by our soldiers, sepoys and followers.' General Harris, the Commander-in-Chief, and his six general officers were later censured for their rapacity.[14] The share of Arthur Wellesley himself in the treasure captured in Srirangapattana was £7,000 in money and £1,200 in jewels,[15] although he had taken no part in the campaign.

It is somewhat difficult to make a correct estimate of Tipu's character. He possessed a curiously ambivalent temperament. His proselytizing zeal, often accompanied by unbridled savagery, was most revolting and yet the same man showed an astonishing veneration for some of

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[14]Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T., *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p. 205.
[15]Roberts, Earl, *THE RISE OF WELLINGTON*, Sampson Low, Marston, 1895, p 9.

the Hindu shrines.[16] He interdicted the manufacture and sale of intoxicants and drugs and forbade the cultivation of henna in gardens. He had a receptive and enlarged mind and the range of his interests embraced Western science, medicine, religion and military tactics. He was an indefatigable worker and was most methodical in his correspondence A valiant soldier and a resourceful commander, he preferred, when the choice was offered to him, the death of a hero to the life of a debased feudatory. When after Tipu's death, the question of Mysore's future arose, Purniah, his able chief minister, advocated the succession of one of the sons of the dead Sultan. The Brahmin minister's preference for Tipu's son even after his master had been safely lodged in his tomb, is perhaps the best tribute that can be paid to the last Muslim ruler of Mysore.[17]

Purniah's views did not, however, prevail. Dundas, who anticipated by more than four decades, his nation's policy of annexation, urged the absorption of Mysore on the ground that it would carry a stage further the essential linking of the British territories in the south He warned the Governor-General against gifting away any part of the conquered territory to the Company's allies—a directive which Wellesley could not accept in its entirety for fear of antagonizing the Nizam. He, however, pacified Dundas with the assurance: 'If you will have a little patience, the death of the Nizam will probably enable me to gratify your *voracious appetite for lands and fortresses.* Seringapatam ought, I think, to stay your stomach awhile; not to mention Tanjore and the Poligar countries. Perhaps, I may be able to give you a supper of Oudh and the Carnatic, if you should still be hungry.'[18] The Dundas-Wellesley combination was never bothered about the statutory injunctions against new conquests In the case of Mysore, however, the old Wodiyar dynasty was resurrected

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[16]Sardesai, G S. *NEW HISTORY OF THE MARATHAS*, Vol III, Phoenix Publications, 1948, p 190

[17]Roberts, P. E, *INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY,* G Bell, 1929, p 63.

[18]Philips, C. H. *THE EAST INDIA COMPANY*—1784-1834, Manchester University Press, 1940, p 104.

from its obscurity and a lad of six was put on the *gadi* on terms that virtually reduced the state into a British possession

Wellesley next turned his attention to Tanjore, also in the south Tanjore, a Maratha principality founded by Shahaji, the father of Shivaji, and given to the latter's step-brother, had preserved its integrity with varying degrees of success after it had been cut off from Maharashtra. The Nawab of Carnatic, the notorious Mohamed Ali, had long cast an eye on the state and was only restrained from acts of aggression by the British guarantee of 1762 to protect its separate existence Tanjore was within the jurisdiction of the Madras government which was notorious for its venality Rightly does Professor Dodwell observe that 'it would be difficult to name a Governor who was neither bribed nor hated by Mohamed Ali'.[19] In 1773, the Nawab succeeded in persuading Wynch, the Governor, to invade Tanjore and depose the Raja. 'The history of our connection with the country,' says Roberts, 'has not, on the face of it, been particularly creditable either to our statesmanship or our good faith.'[20] Belated amends were, however, made to the Raja whose inheritance was restored to him in 1776 by the Governor, Lord Pigot. The restoration infuriated Paul Benfield, to whose notorious character the reader has already been introduced. Benfield claimed that he held assignments on the revenues of Tanjore to the amount of £160,000 for moneys lent to Mohamed Ali and on the growing crop totalling £72,000 for giving loans to individuals The effrontery of the man was amazing; he evidently regarded India and Tanjore as his kitchen-garden His preposterous demands were rightly rejected by Pigot who was, however, held in duress for his decision. Benfield adopted this high-handed measure in collusion with the members of the Madras Council, which resulted in the death of the unfortunate Governor on May 11, 1777.

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[19]Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T, *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p. 111

[20]Roberts, P. E., *INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY*, G. Bell, 1929, p 111.

The affairs of Tanjore continued to drift. The death of the Raja in 1786 without a male issue gave rise to a protracted dispute over the succession between his adopted son, Sarabhoji, and his brother. On the advice of pandits, the latter, a demented tyrant, was chosen, but the dispute dragged on during the regimes of Cornwallis and Shore. The Gordian knot was, however, cut by Wellesley who, in the true style of the fabled monkey 'dividing' the stolen butter between two cats, swallowed the state himself, much to the delectation of Dundas. On October 25, 1799 Sarabhoji, an enlightened and a much better man than his rival, agreed to Tanjore's annexation in return for an annual pension of £40,000 Although Wellesley's methods and reasoning were not always unexceptionable when enforcing his annexations, he was fully justified in pushing into oblivion as many relics of mediaevialism as he could. The absorption of Tanjore into British India was a truly beneficent measure because, in the words of Thornton, its people were 'delivered from the effects of native oppression and European cupidity'.[21]

In the same year, Surat, a state in Western India, fell into Wellesley's lap. Surat was the first British trading centre on the Indian mainland, from where important embassies and missions were taken to the Moghul emperors for concessions. It remained the Company's chief station till 1687 and was then reputed to be the largest city in the country. In 1759, when conditions of anarchy prevailed in the state, the British took possession of the Surat Castle, leaving the civil administration in the hands of the Nawab. The dual system was, however, unworkable and the whole state could have been annexed without much ado in 1790 when the Nawab died, but Cornwallis shrank back from such a course of action. The question of increasing the ruler's share in the cost of defending the castle arose in 1797, but the Nawab died in January 1799 during the progress of the negotiations. The Government was willing

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[21]Malleson, G. B *LIFE OF MARQUESS WELLESLEY*, W H. Allen, 1889, quoted at p 75.

to make over the state to the dead man's brother provided he agreed to assume the stipulated financial burdens. The Nawab-designate expressed his inability to pay more than one lakh of rupees towards the expenses of the garrison—a stand which received the full support of the Resident. Like the stars in their courses, the Governor-General had no mercy for excuses and clinched the issue by annexing the state Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, who was entrusted with this task, performed it with great reluctance. He had a curious habit of converting commoners into potentates at the slightest provocation and achieved the dubious distinction of transforming Kathiawar into a veritable museum of toy principalities, some of which were scarcely more spacious than a garden

Farruckabad, a small state situated in the fertile tract of the Doab and yielding an annual revenue of ten lakhs of rupees, was another principality that was merged into British India Originally a feudatory of the Nawab of Oudh, it had been taken under British protection to ensure its continued existence. Wellesley, however, belied these expectations by ordering the state's annexation, brushing aside both the young Nawab's dignified protests, perhaps penned for him by a wise courtier, and the remonstrances of the Court of Directors

Wellesley's promise to present Hyderabad on a platter to Dundas was not fulfilled. The state survived for another century and a half, staying in the Indian body politic as a steadily putrefying wound and functioning as the bulwark of reaction and anti-nationalism It required the sagacity and determination of a statesman of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's stature to put an end to a political anachronism that should never have been allowed to exist. The Nizam's state was a hotch-potch of three distinct linguistic regions, which deprived it of administrative cohesion. Perfidy and opportunism were the twin evil forces which its rulers employed with great skill and success to ride the storms that threatened them from time to time. Beguiled by the Nizam's protestations of friend-

ship and by his solemn affirmation of religious solidarity, in token of which a splendid copy of the Koran was sent to him, the ill-fated Tipu was pushed to his doom. He felt no moral objection to sharing with the British the territories of a ruler with whom only a little earlier he had pretended so much to promote an enduring concord. Throughout the pre-British period, the sole pre-occupation of the rulers of Hyderabad had been to save themselves from destruction When after the war with Mysore, Cornwallis suggested an alliance between the Marathas and the Nizam, the latter readily acceded to the proposal, but the Marathas, who regarded their relations with the Nizam in the same light as the English treated the Nawab of Oudh, summarily rejected it

Alarmed at the Maratha refusal to treat him as their ally, the Nizam begged for British protection, which Cornwallis politely rejected being unwilling to embroil himself with the Maratha confederacy. His policy of neutrality, which, however, was not consistent with his earlier action in going to war against Tipu on behalf of the Raja of Travancore, was faithfully pursued by Shore, his successor. The Marathas made most of the opportunity which the British policy thus afforded them and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Nizam at Kharda in March 1795, the leaders of the confederacy fighting unitedly under the banner of the Peshwa for the last time. Like Plassey, Kharda was a dismal affair, in which, not courage and valour, but timidity and foolishness predominated. The Maratha victory was so overwhelming and was won so cheaply that the young Peshwa was astonished at the pusillanimity of the enemy and distressed at the jubilation of his people over their unearned laurels. The contrast between him and Clive, the victor of a similar unfought battle, is noteworthy.

When Wellesley assumed charge of the Governor-Generalship, he found the Nizam in a sullen and resentful mood. To protect himself from another disaster, the Nizam had strengthened his army with French contingents. By a conspicuous display of tact and boldness, the new Governor-

General succeeded in both reclaiming the Nizam to the fold of the Company's faithful allies and in securing the dispersal of French troops. By the treaty of September 1, 1798, the security and permanence of the Nizam's dynasty were guaranteed and British troops were stationed in his territory to fulfil this obligation. As a reward for contributing to Tipu's destruction, he was given districts yielding 6,07,332 pagodas and later acquired two-thirds of the territories which had been offered to the Peshwa but rejected by him. His territorial gains were, however, short-lived. By a new treaty, concluded on October 2, 1800, he was persuaded to resign his new acquisitions in lieu of payment for a bigger and a more expensive subsidiary force. After all, Dundas' desire for a bigger empire in India did not go unfulfilled, although he would have liked to have the whole of Hyderabad for his repast. Never energetic, the state thenceforward sank to the status of a servile feudatory, always willing to make the most abject obeisance to its preserver and overlord. 'Its importance,' says Edward Thompson, 'was trivial in the extreme, and its independence completely fictitious, in the half century before the mutiny, and perhaps most of all in Lord Wellesley's time. No one deviated from an attitude of steady contempt for it.'[22]

Perhaps, one of the most notable services rendered by Wellesley to South India was his suppression of the plague-spot known as Carnatic. The very name of the state was false, just as its ruler was a fraud. The Nawab ruled over an area which largely comprised what is known as Tamilnad and yet it was called Carnatic—a misspelt and a mispronounced name that has never existed on the real map of India Karnatak in reality is the area inhabited by the Kannada-speaking people, with whom the Nawab had no manner of connection.

As we have seen, Mohamed Ali was an embarrassing ally of the English, who tarnished their name and oppress-

[22]Thompson, Edward, *THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN PRINCES*. Oxford University Press, 1943, p 16.

ed his people by every known and new species of extortion. The Company's own contribution to the distress of Carnatic was nearly as great as that of the venerable-looking rascal who blithely contracted debts of staggering proportions and mortgaged his territories to his creditors in order to find money for his extravagances and for bribing his political masters. 'He totally sequestered himself,' says Burke, 'from his country .... He has continued a constant cabal with the Company's servants, from the highest to the lowest, creating out of the ruins of the country, brilliant fortunes for those who will, and entirely destroying those who will not be subservient to his purposes.' He was not 'a real potentate', but a 'shadow, a dream, an incubus of oppression'. Cornwallis was convinced that the travails of Carnatic could be best ended by pensioning off Mohamed Ali, but his good intentions were frustrated by the wily Nawab and his English partners in inequity. In July 1792, the Nawab secured relief from the burden of the subsidy, the heaviness of which was partly responsible for his financial embarrassments, although the concession in no way mended his habits of reckless expenditure.

Even Mohamed Ali had to die and this unmourned event took place in October 1795 when it was hoped that the nightmare of misrule would end in Carnatic. But Amurath to Amurath succeeds! His son and successor dutifully fulfilled his filial obligations by acquiring all his parent's infirmities, while his friends found in him an equally pliant tool. Shore strove in vain to lift the state 'out of its pestilential morass of maladministration' Wellesley was, however, a more determined and successful deliverer of Carnatic. He conveniently discovered in the correspondence that had passed between Tipu and the late Nawab sufficient material for denouncing the dead man and his son as traitors to British connection. By working himself up into a mighty fury, real or pretended, he declared that the Nawab forfeited his throne by the 'hostile counsels ...... modelled upon the artful example, actuated by

the faithless spirit, and sanctified by the testamentary voice of his father'. At this stage, to the great embarrassment of the Governor-General, the Nawab died on July 15, 1801 Since his Lordship could not pursue the dead man in his grave, he peremptorily directed the minor prince, the Nawab's successor, to resign his inheritance. He ignored the protests of the prince's regents and, getting hold of a nephew of the late Nawab, proceeded to perform the obsequies of the state. On July 25, 1801 a treaty was made with the new man, whereby the government of the state passed into the Company's hands.

Any condemnation of Wellesley's indifference to ends and means in the Carnatic transaction would be entirely misplaced, as no sane person could possibly advocate the continued existence of the decadent state. Wellesley was, therefore, quite right when he claimed that the annexation of Carnatic was 'perhaps the most salutary and useful measure which has been adopted since the acquisition of the *Diwani* of Bengal'. Perhaps, he would have won wider acceptance for his action if he had annexed the state on the unexceptionable ground of chronic misrule. Such a straightforward course would have won the approbation of even the fastidious and censorious Mill who wrote. 'On this ground, we should have deemed the Company justified, in proportion as the feelings of millions are of more value than the feelings of an individual, in seizing the government of the Carnatic long before; and on the same principle, rejoice that every inch of ground within the limits of India was subject to their sway.'[23]

The Governor-General's dealings with Oudh were even more devious He had undoubtedly a strong case for annexing the state, as the Nawabs violated all canons of civilized government Like a deadly curse, misgovernment had become their hereditary infirmity. The exactions of the rulers, the levy of heavy subsidies by the paramount power and the aggrandizement of the state's trade by Bri-

[23]Roberts, P. E, *INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY*, G Bell, 1929, quoted at pages 108, 109

tish adventurers, deepened the misery and the destitution of the people. The country, says a biographer of Wellesley, was flooded with needy and unscrupulous adventurers, while the administration was 'corrupted by the vices alike of East and West..... Honest commerce had slender sustenance where the leeches had fixed their hold.'[24] Cornwallis was struck as much by the puerile but costly pursuits of the Nawab as by the desolate condition of Oudh, but he could do nothing by way of reform except to reduce the subsidy from seventy-five lakhs of rupees to fifty lakhs *per annum*. Shore noted that the dominions of Asaf-ud-daula were 'in the precise condition to tempt a rebellion' and when the Nawab died in 1797, he set aside the succession of the late ruler's reputed son of mean birth and of ruffianly character and elevated Sadat Ali, the dead man's brother, to the gadi. He concluded a treaty with the new ruler, whereby the annual tribute was raised to seventy-six lakhs of rupees, thus neutralising the small relief that had been granted earlier by Cornwallis. Sadat Ali, like his predecessors, was a despicable ruler.

This was the state of affairs when Wellesley turned his attention towards Oudh. By 1799, he had set his heart on taking over the state and, with the active support of Dundas for his annexationist policy, nothing could have prevented him from going ahead with the project. Instead, he began to bully and badger the Nawab to gain ends of lesser importance. He called on the ruler to accept a bigger army of occupation and pay a heavier subsidy to meet the additional expenditure. Even the pretext of Afghan menace failed to justify the demand, which was flatly in defiance of the terms of the 1797 treaty which laid down that no increase in the levy should be demanded except in case of necessity and then only in proportion to and 'contemporary with the necessity'. The Governor-General envisaged a permanent increase both in the Company's forces and the tribute, for which there was no

[24]Hutton, W. H. *THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY*, Rulers of India Series, Clarendon Press, 1893, p 67.

sanction in the treaty. The increased subsidy totalled the staggering sum of one crore and twenty-six lakhs of rupees which Oudh, in its distracted condition, could not afford to pay. The humble pleadings and expostulations of the Nawab were summarily rejected, thus provoking Mill to observe: 'Such is the logic of the strong man towards the weak.'

Disgusted at Wellesley's bullying tactics, the Nawab notified in November 1799 his decision to abdicate. The Governor-General was delighted, but when he began to roll up his sleeves to gather the windfall, the Nawab withdrew his offer! Baulked of his prey, Wellesley launched a crushing attack on the Nawab, to whom he felt constrained to communicate 'in the most unqualified terms, the astonishment, regret, and indignation which your recent conduct has excited in my mind'. When the bewildered ruler asked humbly what precisely was his guilt, Wellesley rejoined that if 'in formally answering his lordship's letter, his Excellency should think it proper to impeach the honour and justice of the British Government in similar terms, . the Governor-General would consider how such unfounded calumnies and gross misrepresentations' .. deserve to be noticed' Evidently, in the eyes of this Olympian god the Nawab was no bigger than a worm! 'In such documents,' say Thompson and Garratt, '(a good number of them exist) the paramount power does not condescend to anything essentially so base as argument'

The Nawab yielded, but not early enough to prevent new demands being sprung upon him. In reality, Wellesley wanted the cession of territories to meet the cost of the augmented subsidiary force and not a mere increase in the tribute On November 10, 1801 he forced a treaty on the Nawab, by which the Company Government gained possession of Rohilkhand and the Lower Doab, the most fertile country lying between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna Later, when the Nawab complained about the interference and the overbearing attitude of the Resident,

Wellesley bluntly replied that such intervention was 'indispensably necessary for the support of the British influence in Oudh'. Wellesley's behaviour towards Oudh was most objectionable and indefensible. He would have been both honest and upright if he had annexed the state outright on the unimpeachable ground that the Nawabs were inherently incapable of governing well. Instead he used his superior power and position to coerce the helpless ruler into a course of action that was most repugnant to his wishes. A great opportunity to cure the canker of misrule in the heart of India was thus lost. Governor-General after Governor-General that succeeded Wellesley urged in vain for better government in the state until at last, directed by the home authorities, Dalhousie put an end to the travails of its people by annexing it in 1856.

While the Company government was winning an empire for itself in the country with the aid of sword and strategem, the Marathas, in blissful ignorance of their impending doom, were engaged in the pastime of mutual annihilation The remark that the pre-mature death of Madhav Rao Peshwa was far more disastrous to their cause than even their defeat at Panipat was not a mere flourish of language but a sober fact of history. At this time Maharashtra was singularly bereft of great leaders. The death of Mahadji Sindhia on February 12, 1794 was a national misfortune He was a practical statesman who was also a competent soldier He conceived the bold project of establishing Maratha hegemony in the whole of India, but his dream was frustrated by the petty jealousies and personal ambitions of his compatriots. Even the great Nana Phadanvis could not overcome this weakness. Maratha distractions increased ten-fold with the sudden death, on October 27, 1795, of Savai Madhav Rao, the young Peshwa, who had begun well in guiding the fortunes of the empire. The issue of succession aroused acute and irreconcilable dissensions among the leading men which resulted in the destruction of Maratha unity. Everywhere 'Hercules killed hart-a-grease, and hart-a-grease killed Hercules.'

Nana Phadanvis, who headed the faction that opposed the elevation of Raghoba's son, Bajirao, was defeated in his wise attempts, humiliated and swept out of office. Bajirao, who received the robes of Peshwa on December 6, 1796, reinstated the statesman in his office, but the two could never work together in harmony. Though endowed with a few virtues, the new Peshwa was an insufferable master. He was handsome, charming and versatile, but he was also a consummate rascal—cunning, deceitful and treacherous. From distant Calcutta, Wellesley watched the growing feebleness of the Peshwa's authority which, he noted, was reduced 'to a state of extreme weakness by the imbecility of his counsels, by the instability and treachery of his disposition, and by the prevalence of internal discord'. Like a tiger stalking its prey, he remained watchful with the intention of delivering a mortal blow at the heart of the Maratha empire.

Nana Phadanvis, the last of the great Maratha statesmen, died on March 13, 1800 and, in the celebrated words of Colonel Palmer, the British Resident at Poona, 'with him has departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Maratha government'. In spite of suicidal conflicts, faithless friends and treacherous allies, Nana had controlled Maratha politics for thirty-eight years with conspicuous ability and wisdom. He respected the English for their valour, their sense of discipline and their spirit of adventure, but he firmly rejected their offer of political alliance, seeing in such relations the certain loss of Maratha independence. No less a person than Wellesley appreciated the Poona statesman's stand. 'Nana,' he said, 'has too much wisdom to involve the Maratha empire in such desperate connections.' His tribute to the great Maratha, though less widely known, is as eloquent as that of Palmer. The Governor-General wrote: "The loss of persons distinguished for their talents, great qualities and abilities, is at all times a subject of regret. The melancholy news, therefore, of the death of Balaji Pandit, the able minister of your State, whose upright principles and honourable

views, and whose zeal for the welfare and prosperity both of the dominions of his own immediate superiors and of others, were so justly celebrated, occasions concern.'

The fortunes of the Marathas now passed into the hands of three desperate men—Bajirao, the Peshwa, Daulatrao Sindhia, the youthful and hare-brained successor of Mahadji Sindhia, and Yeshwantrao Holkar, the brave but reckless ruler of Indore. The traditional animosity between Sindhia and Holkar precipitated a civil war, culminating in the defeat of the former and the capture of Poona by his victorious rival. The Peshwa, who in flagrant disregard of his responsibilities as the overlord, had sided with Daulatrao, fled the capital in panic and on December 31, 1802, signed the ignominious treaty of Bassein with the British. By the terms of the treaty, which sounded the death-knell of the great Maratha empire, the Peshwa agreed to accept a large subsidiary force in his territory, to forswear his claims on Surat; to give his *imprimatur* to the treaties and engagements concluded by the English with the Gaekwar of Baroda; to abstain from hostilities or negotiations with other states except with the consent of his new masters, and similarly not to have independent dealings with the Nizam or the Gaekwar. Rightly did the Marathas lament that the treaty eclipsed their independence.

Never too distinguished for their military valour, the Gaekwars generally kept themselves aloof from the vicissitudes of Maratha politics. Kharda was the last occasion when they made common cause with their kinsmen. The Gaekwar anticipated the Peshwa by accepting on June 25, 1802, British paramountcy over his state. So docile was the Maharaja that he resigned his responsibilities to the Resident, Major Walker, who became the *de facto* ruler of the state. 'Henceforward,' says Edward Thompson, 'the troubles which for twenty years came thick and fast upon his brethren were probably interesting news items to him, but they were nothing more. The other Marathas continued

to be like the sea that is never at rest. But he himself had said good-bye to all that, and was *emeritus* from it.'[25]

With the accession of the last Peshwa, the Marathas forgot the value of concerted action. It never occurred to them to combine in order to preserve the integrity of their empire even after Bajirao's perfidious action at Bassein. It is true that Sindhia and Bhosle of Nagpur protested against the treaty, but their attempts to retrieve the situation lacked vision and planning. Both were defeated heavily by the British and were reduced to the same vassal condition as their erstwhile overlord. At Assai, Sindhia's troops fought well and fiercely but were severely beaten by General Wellesley's forces on September 24, 1803. Marching onward into Berar, the General inflicted a decisive defeat upon Bhosle's troops at Adgaum (Argaon) on November 29. In the following month, December 25, he captured by storm the hillfort of Gavilgad (Gawailghur). General Lake's successes in the North were equally noteworthy. He captured Aligarh by assault and expelled Sindhia's forces from Delhi, where he secured the person of the Emperor 'who is regularly listed along with territories etc as if he were an inanimate piece of loot'. Agra was besieged and captured, and in the final battle at Laswadi (Laswaree), Sindhia's seventeen battalions of trained infantry, supported by excellent artillery, sustained a smashing defeat on November 1, 1803. The result of the action was never in doubt, as nearly all the senior French officers of the Gwalior army, headed by Perron, had earlier deserted their master, leaving the command in the hands of inferior and incompetent men.

The terms of the treaties dictated to Gwalior and Nagpur were harsh. Both were compelled to recognise the political arrangements made by the British with the Peshwa. Both entered into defensive compacts with their conquerors and agreed to admit British Residents to their courts. They also undertook not to engage any Europeans other than the

[25]Thompson, Edward, *THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN PRINCES*, Oxford University Press, 1943, pp 16, 17.

English in their service and to make a large cession of territories to the Company government. Daulatrao dismissed his French officers and agreed to the stationing of a large British force near his frontier at his cost. The various stipulations were embodied in the Treaty of Devgaon, concluded with Bhosle on December 17, 1803, and in the Treaty of Surji Anjangaon, made with Sindhia on December 30.

Yeshwantrao Holkar, who had all the while watched the struggle of his compatriots with the British with amused interest, as if a friendly tournament was in progress, suddenly decided to enter the lists single-handed against the powerful foreigners. He cherished the illusion that the traditional methods of evasive fighting would bring him victory. In an absurd letter, addressed to General Wellesley, he wrote: 'Countries of many hundred *coss* shall be overrun and plundered. Lord Lake shall not have leisure to breathe for a moment; and calamities will fall on lakhs of human beings, in continual war, by the attacks of my army, which overwhelms like the waves of the sea!' One wonders whether the author of the letter, who had himself witnessed the destruction of more powerful states than his own, was really in his senses when he wrote it. It is true that Colonel Monson's disastrous retreat, resulting in the loss of five battalions and six companies by the British, confirmed that Holkar was a competent and skilful soldier, but his temporary victory did not in any way strengthen his position or prove the superiority of his mode of warfare. In fact, he was soon forced to fight a severe action at Dig in November 1804 and was relentlessly pursued by Lake's flying columns till he took refuge in the Punjab. After some time he returned and signed the Treaty of Rajghat on December 24, 1805, on terms similar to those dictated to the other Maratha belligerents. Similarly, Lake's costly failure before the Fort of Bharatpur, while it certainly affected the prestige of the British, did not materially advance the interests of Indians. Isolated episodes such as these, though illumined by heroic deeds, could not deflect the main course of history. It was no

longer possible to resist the tide of British conquest in India.

Why did the greatness of the Marathas, who could well have become the rulers of India after the fall of the Moghuls, spread its wings and take flight in such a precipitate manner? This vital question may be briefly answered here First, the high purpose and the noble ideals that animated the founder of the empire, Shivaji, were forgotten and the men that guided its destiny gradually lost their conscience and manhood. Far from setting an example in just and honourable behaviour, some of its leaders became guilty of disgraceful misconduct. Raghunathrao Patwardhan did not consider it an act of impiety to burn the ancient monastery of Shri Shankaracharya at Shringeri in Mysore in order to give rein to his impotent rage against Tipu who had earlier defeated him. Yeshwantrao Holkar, a pillar of the empire, perpetrated indescribable excesses even at the pilgrim centres of Maharashtra and mercilessly pillaged the capital. 'There was,' say Thomson and Garratt, 'a complete slump in Maratha character at this time, an anarchy and desperate wickedness such as followed Ranjit Singh's death in the Punjab, in 1839. As in that instance, it led to the coming of the British.'[26]

Secondly, caught in the vortex of their own petty quarrels, the Marathas, like their other countrymen, failed to prepare themselves to meet the growing menace of British ascendancy. Their besetting weakness, as Sardesai points out, was disunity. To this fatal infirmity, they added an incredible ignorance of the great changes that were taking place around them. They knew almost nothing about the British, their country, their culture, their resources and the secret of their invincibility. Even Nana Phadanvis, in spite of his uncanny access to the political secrets of the English, was, to quote Sardesai again, 'ignorant not only of the geography of the outside world but

[26]Thompson, Edward and Garratt, G. T, *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p. 213.

even of India'. In contrast, the British diligently and thoroughly acquainted themselves with the strength and the weakness of the Marathas. Men like Lord Wellesley, his two brothers, Malcolm, Munro, Metcalfe, Elphinstone, Close and Tod, to mention only some names, furnished the finest examples of statesmanship and sagacity. Ranged against them were, with rare exceptions, men of straw headed by the Peshwa, 'a monster of duplicity and cruelty'. Nemesis would not spare a country that bred such wicked men.

Thirdly, the original armies of the Marathas, which performed prodigies of valour, were inspired by a common bond of country and language. A kind of 'primeval plainness' had prevailed among them so that one could see even powerful chieftains doing the most ordinary chores at the end of a hard day's fighting. With the extension of their territories, the composition and calibre of their forces changed so much that the Marathas were almost entirely relegated to the cavalry, while the infantry was composed mostly of North Indians. The artillery arm was commanded and manned by the Portuguese and Indian Christians The national character of their armies was virtually destroyed as their dependence on Western arms, Western officers and Western strategy increased. Under the new system, it was necessary not only to acquire the services of professional soldiers from abroad, but also to maintain a strong reserve of officers. As the behaviour of Perron and other foreign mercenaries proved, too much reliance could not be placed on the loyalty of such men. Moreover, on account of her naval supremacy, it was perfectly easy for Britain to starve India of supplies of essential warlike materials from Europe. A discerning man like General Wellesley welcomed the change in the organisation and composition of the Maratha armies, because they could be destroyed in one concentrated blow The costliness of the imported armour made recovery from defeat almost impossible. But the fate of the guerilla warfare was equally sealed. It was very well for Yeshwantrao Holkar to proclaim that the fortune of the Maratha armies

was on their saddle-bow, but, as he himself realised, predatory warfare was singularly ineffective against a disciplined, well-armed and determined enemy. General Wellesley dismissed the guerilla methods as unworthy of serious consideration, as lighter bodies could not expect to inflict much damage on properly equipped and competently led forces.

Lastly, the fact that India failed to unite even in the presence of grave danger to her independence was evidence of her prostrate condition. She was tired, dispirited and demoralized and was caught in that condition by a young and vital power that had begun to scale new heights of material progress and prosperity. Inspired by a lofty sense of patriotism and determined to strive for the greater glory of their nation, the British came to India with their goals well defined and their minds made up. Moreover, their wide-ranging interests, their spirit of adventure and their incomparably superior knowledge of the world and its affairs gave them an advantage which a land-locked people could never expect to attain. They had, therefore, little difficulty in dealing with the inhabitants of this country, whose outlook being warped by feudalism and separatism, tended to scatter them into sticks that could be easily and serially broken.

Wellesley's name is intimately associated with the political system that became the basis of the relations between the princely states and the British Indian Government. He did not originate the subsidiary system, but made it famous by perfecting it. It was customary for his predecessors to exercise the prerogatives of paramountcy by stationing British Residents and the Company's troops in the territories of their dependent allies and by collecting tribute for their maintenance. But Wellesley's arrangements went much further, for, like Frederick of Prussia, he believed that it was unwise to trust a reconciled enemy. In pursuance of this policy, he condemned the states to rigid isolation by forbidding all contacts with foreign countries and even amongst themselves without the consent of their overlords. The subsidies were replaced by cessions of

territories. Wellesley refused to treat the princes as royal personages and by his dictatorial methods and policies reduced their principalities to a position outside the pale of both municipal and international law. Under his regime, it became impossible for his subordinate allies to escape the harsh logic of their dependence on and subservience to the all-powerful British.

Perhaps, the system would not have merited much consideration if it had merely affected the princes and their masters. It became obnoxious because it introduced a new political factor that was entirely alien to this country. While it ensured the helplessness and subordination of the princes in their dealings with the Government of India, it rendered them completely independent of their people, thus destroying the time-honoured nexus of relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Enjoying the protection of the powerful British, the princes could effectively destroy the popular will in their territories and yet claim immunity from the consequences of their irresponsiblity. It was an unheard of arrangement and could point to no precedent in any civilized country. The ancient Indian commentator, Kautilya, than whom there could not have been a more ardent supporter of monarchy, declared that it was the inescapable obligation of a ruler to govern well. 'Hence,' he says, 'a king of unrighteous character and of vicious habits will, though he is an emperor, fall a prey either to the fury of his own subjects or to that of his enemies.'[27] Christian theology also rejects such an iniquitous system. For instance, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) wrote: 'A king who is unfaithful to his duty forfeits his claim to obedience. It is not rebellion to depose him, for he is himself a rebel, whom the nation has a right to put down.' Again, in England the barons of the Magna Carta were not concerned to make new laws, but to prevent the violation of existing rights. 'The importance of the Charter,' says H. A. L. Fisher, 'is due to the

[27]*KAUTILYA'S ARTHASASTRA*, edited by R Shamasastry, Government Oriental Library series, Government Press, Bangalore, 1915, p 321.

fact that it is the first example in our history of a national protest against a bad government.'[28] The following last example is derived from the observations of an autocrat himself; writing on 'enlightened despotism', Frederick the Second said: 'The sovereign represents the State; he and his people form one single body, which can only be happy in so far as it is harmoniously united.' The greatest charge against Wellesley's subsidiary system was that it made the promotion of any such community of interests between the princes and their people almost impossible

Men like General Wellesley and Munro deplored the introduction of the new system, the latter condemning it on the ground that it rendered a prince 'indolent by teaching him to trust to strangers for his security; and cruel and avaricious, by showing him that he has nothing to fear from the hatred of his subjects'[29] In spite of its inherent viciousness, the system was neither abandoned nor substantially modified in later years. It developed into a nightmare for more than ninety million people whose redemption became possible only with the destruction of the states themselves. Wellesley was thus responsible in no small measure for their prolonged misery.

Wellesley, described by his admirers as 'that glorious little man', was, as we have already observed, notoriously urbane and condescending. 'He never,' writes Edward Thompson, 'caught even the most fleeting glimpse of any point of view but his own, which was always pikestaff plain and crystal-clear to him.' He regarded the Supreme Council and its members as a colossal superfluity and seldom took notice of them. Since there could be only one vote in the Council, that vote being his, he was not bothered about arriving with his colleagues at a real community of decision. They could meet and debate amongst themselves to their heart's content, but they were a pack of deluded men if they expected his lordship

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[28]Fisher, H A L. *A HISTORY OF EUROPE*, Edward Arnold. 1957, p 302

[29]Gleig, G. R, *THE LIFE OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR THOMAS MUNRO* Vol. I, Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830, pp. 462, 463.

to be present when they were engaged in thrashing out bushels of tittle tattle!

His attitude towards his superiors was no less offensive He dismissed the Court of Directors as 'that most loathsome den of the India House'. His College at Fort William to train young English Civilians in India was an excellent project, but it failed to win the approval of his masters as they were both alarmed and angered by his extravagance and overbearing attitude towards them. The defeat of Monson at the hands of Holkar and the discomfiture of Lake before Bharatpur furnished a good opportunity for the home authorities to recall their domineering proconsul. His own friend, Pitt, conceded the need for withdrawing him from the Indian Government on the ground that he had 'acted most imprudently and illegally'. Wellesley could not, of course, be expected to be indulgent towards the press which, as we shall see in a later chapter, was vigorously held in check by him.

It is difficult from the Indian point of view to arrive at a correct estimate of Wellesley's term of office in India To most of his countrymen his achievements were, in the words of Malcolm, 'calculated to excite astonishment'. There is no doubt that by his successes, he made the paramountcy of British rule in India certain and inevitable. As will be proved in its proper place, Wellesley was a much bolder annexationist than Dalhousie who has been needlessly acclaimed as the greatest destroyer of the benighted princely states. Nevertheless, since British dominion in India became inevitable, Wellesley would have done well to tidy up the country's political map on a much bigger scale It is, however, doubtful whether during his seven years' stay in this country, he ever stumbled upon an entity called the Indian people. Their miseries and many hungers never disturbed his dreams, nor did they abate his zest for ostentatious living. It is true that in his diplomatic duels with Oudh, he drew the Nawab's attention to his people's misery, but the reference was merely to score a point over his adversary. 'He must', says the *Oxford History of India*, 'be judged in terms of power rather than

urgently in the near future.'[23] Two other defects in the system may be noted. As the Report points out, probably nowhere among the universities of the world is there such a large proportion of failures in examinations as in the Indian universities Besides, the system has bred a new and rapidly growing class, namely, the educated unemployed, whose early absorption into the country's economic life is an urgent national necessity.

The defects of the present system are thus deep-rooted. Emotional onslaughts upon its cannot yield the desired results. It was devised at a time when the philosophy of evolution was still in its infancy. Its authors failed to realise the value of tolerance towards alien institutions and of adopting a respectful attitude towards the human mind This explains why men like Macaulay embarked upon the task of enlightening the mind of India without studying its nature or its previous history. The need for a change is thus obvious, but whatever form the new system may take, it is the path of prudence to retain English for a long enough period as the medium of teaching at the university stage and to provide a good grounding in that language in the high schools so that students pursuing higher studies may not feel overwhelmed by its strangeness Both the University Education Commission, over which Dr S. Radhakrishnan presided, and the country's Constitution have upheld the claims of Hindi to be recognised as the language of administration and of instruction. The Commission, however, pleads that the change-over to Hindi should be gradual. It says: 'English has become so much a part of our national habit that a plunge into an altogether different system seems attended with unusual risks.'[24] A similar note of caution has been struck by other responsible bodies, including the Law Commission which, in its Report of 1959, suggests the replacement of English by Hindi 'at some convenient date in the future.'

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[23] *POST-WAR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA*, January 1944, page 23 (The Report is better known as Sargent Report).

[24] *THE REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMISSION*. December 1948—August 1949, Vol I, p. 316

There is a growing realisation that this cautious policy should be pursued until such time as Hindi becomes competent enough to take the place of English and wins the willing allegiance of all the principal elements of the population.

Bentinck's attitude towards the press was informed by the same spirit of liberalism that animated his other activities. He could not abolish Adam's notorious press regulation of 1823 during his term of office, but he readily entertained the petition presented to him on Febuary 6, 1835 by Dwarkanath Tagore and others praying for the repeal of the measure. The English written press in India did not have a healthy origin. Journals were started by mediocre and unscrupulous men to give public expression to private resentments. They trespassed all bounds of decency by the scurrility of their abuse and possessed in full measure the repugnant qualities of a gutter-snipe.

The first newspaper in India appeared in 1780 under the editorship of James Hicky, who called it the *Bengal Gazette*. Its stormy and notorious career came to an end two years later when it was suppressed by Warren Hastings. A number of new journals came into existence in the following years and 'a running fight for freedom of speech was waged with Government.' The press was more circumspect when commenting on Cornwallis and his Government and found the regime of Wellesley extremely hazardous to its survival. Wellesley was an aggressive autocrat and could not tolerate even the most temperate criticism of his administration. In 1801, he issued stringent press regulations, demanding that every paper should carry the name of its editor, that all editors and proprietors should submit their names to the Government and that no paper should be issued before its inspection by an official. The Governor-General made a great show of his piety by prohibiting the publication of journals on Sundays His biographer, Pearce, felt constrained to observe that his press laws varied 'in no material particular from the ordinances promulgated by the Star Chamber in A.D.

1585.' A victim of the regulations described them as 'the *ne plus ultra* of human despotism'[25] The press remained in duress during the regime of Minto who also subjected it to 'very vigilant superintendence'.

Lord Hastings abolished the office of censor in 1818 and received undeserved acclaim for this action, as the new set of rules issued by him were nearly as stringent as the original During his brief term of office as acting Governor-General, John Adam won notoriety by promulgating stringent press regulations on March 14, 1823, which introduced the hateful licensing system. The restrictions had the effect of taking 'all pith and manhood out of the journals of the day.' In the same year, he struck one more blow at the freedom of the press by deporting James Silk Buckingham, the independent-minded editor of *Calcutta Journal,* on a trivial issue. Buckingham was a competent and progressive journalist who heartily supported Ram Mohun Roy's crusade on behalf of progress and enlightenment. As in other spheres of public activity, Ram Mohun Roy took the lead in opposing Adam's Draconian press laws and sought, though unsuccessfully, the intervention of the Supreme Court against them.[26] He maintained that only by permitting an 'unrestricted liberty of publication' could a government expect to avoid making mistakes in managing the affairs of a vast empire. A distinguished journalist himself, he fought for the rights of the fourth estate with the same determination that marked his championship of other noble causes

Metcalfe, who was convinced that the British rule in India would not be jeopardised by granting a reasonable degree of latitude to the press, abolished Adam's regulations in 1835 soon after he became Governor-General. By doing so, he ruined his own prospects in this country, as his action was not liked by the home authorities. Matters rested there until Lord Canning's Act of 1857 reintroduced

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[25]Roberts, P E, *INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY* G. Bell, 1929, p. 176
[26]*RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY AND PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS IN INDIA,* edited by Jatindra Kumar Majumdar, Art Press, Calcutta, 1941, p. LXII.

the main features of Adam's ruthless regulation of 1823. Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act of 1878 made deep inroads into the freedom of the Indian language papers. With misleading plausibility, he contended that for the security of the state, restrictions on the press were necessary in the same manner as prohibition of a promiscuous sale of dangerous drugs was not a derogation from the freedom of trade! Lord Ripon dismissed such arguments as untenable and pointed out in his letter to the Secretary of State for India that Lytton's measure 'constituted a direct departure from the policy with respect to the press in this country, which had been followed by the Government of India for upwards of forty years'[27] He accordingly repealed the Act in December 1881.

It was, however, in the nature of things impossible that the press in India could expect to function effectively under British rule. Collision between it and the Government was inevitable so long as the papers reflected the sentiments and aspirations of the people when they became increasingly impatient of foreign rule The charge that a section of the press was unrestrained in its attacks on Authority is best countered by recalling the fact that nothing is more derogatory to the self-respect of a people than to be told that they are unfit to govern themselves. The bureaucracy was often so touchy that even the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, than whom it was impossible to find a more gentle and fair-minded critic, were sigmatised as seditious.

Since independence, the press has happily passed that stage. Its responsibilities are now different and more onerous than before Free India has embarked on the mighty task of rehabilitating her stagnant economy and is determined to banish poverty, ignorance and disease from the land It is a stupendous undertaking, in which the co-operation of the press, with its great influence and

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[27]Natarajan, J, *HISTORY OF INDIAN JOURNALISM*, Part II, (Report of the Press Commission), Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1955, p. 93.

prestige, is vitally necessary. Greater attention to Indian news and topics and informed discussion of social and economic problems, more than political leader-writing, will most definitely enhance the usefulness of the newspapers and periodicals. The press can certainly fulfil its new obligations to the country, as a section of it has already been doing, if the right type of journalist is attracted to the profession. In the changed circumstances of to-day, security of service and good remuneration will probably serve the cause of the freedom of the press far more effectively than mere reminders to the journalists about the nobility of their calling. The change that has taken place in the structure of the press since independence deserves special attention. More and more organs of public opinion are falling into the hands of an increasingly smaller number of proprietors[28] — a development that deserves to be carefully watched in the interests of a healthy growth of the press in India.

To return to the regime of Bentinck after this long but necessary digression, the Directors had good reason to congratulate themselves on their choice of Bentinck who, in spite of his career as a soldier, had proved himself a competent civil administrator. He refilled the empty treasury by transforming an annual deficit of one million pounds into a surplus of one and a half million pounds He wielded the pruning knife with great dexterity and firmness, but the reduction of the *batta* or allowance to troops proved unpopular and was denounced as petty-fogging and ineffective. This trivial measure won for him the title of the 'Clipping Dutchman', while the saving to the Government did not amount to more than £20,000 a year. Bentinck's far-reaching social and financial measures played no small part in ensuring the continued existence of the Company after the Charter Act of 1833. His regime was equally noteworthy for revenue and judicial reform. Persian was replaced by the local languages in the lower

[28]*REPORT OF THE PRESS COMMISSION,* Part I, Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1956, p 501

courts and by English in the high courts. The powers, the emoluments and the status of Indian judges were increased.

The Governor-General gave his whole-hearted support to Colonel Sleeman's campaign against the *thags* (thugs), a band of hereditary assassins, who roamed the country robbing and strangling peaceful and unwary travellers. By determined action, the menace of the hangmen of the highways was finally destroyed.

Bentinck seldom intervened in the affairs of the states, but took firm action when instances of flagrant misrule were brought to his notice. The Raja of Mysore, who had been put on the *gadi* by Wellesley after the defeat and death of Tipu, proved himself incompetent and vicious. In 1831, he was once again swept back into obscurity with ample provision. For fifty years the state remained under the benevolent and able administration of British officers and was handed back to the ruling house by Lord Ripon in 1881 Mysore's claims that it was the most advanced princely state in India should be appreciated by remembering the fact that it had the unique advantage of being under the tutelage of competent administrators for half a century In 1832, Cachar, a petty principality on the north-west frontier of Bengal, was annexed at the request of the inhabitants. Two years later, 1834, Coorg, a picturesque district in the South, where every prospect pleases, but whose ruler was a monster of cruelty, was merged into British India, again, in response to the unanimous wish of the people.

Bentinck was the first Governor-General who entertained serious apprehensions about the Russian menace to India and sought to safeguard his territories by forging closer links of friendship with the neighbouring Sikh state. In October 1831, he and Ranjit Singh met at Rupar, amidst scenes of great splendour, and concluded a treaty of perpetual amity which lasted for seventeen years.

Bentinck left this country in March 1835, perhaps with the certainty that his place in the history of British India

was assured. Belying the misgivings of all who had noted his impulsiveness and want of solidity during his previous assignments, he exhibited remarkable powers of statesmanship as the Governor-General of India. He showed his contempt for absurd tradition by permitting Indians to drive to his residence and presumably believed that his example would serve as a corrective to the growing racial arrogance of his people. Though there was a certain want of warmth in his benevolence, he, more than any other British Indian ruler before his time, gave practical effect to the principle that the essential function of a Government is to promote the well-being of its people In his solicitude for the inhabitants of this country and in his enthusiasm for progressive causes, he may justly be compared with another good and great statesman, Lord Ripon. By his innovation and reform, Bentinck laid the foundation of India's progress along Western lines and thus paved the way for Dalhousie, also a convinced Westernizer, to achieve greater success in shortening the distance between the East and the West.

5. *LORD DALHOUSIE*

DURING the period that elapsed between the departure of Lord William Bentinck in 1835 and the arrival of Lord Dalhousie in 1848 four Governors-General came and went, each leaving his own mark on the affairs of India. Metcalfe, who held the office temporarily, ruined his chances of permanent appointment by liberalising the press laws—an action that both alarmed and angered the Directors. He was succeeded by Auckland in 1836. Auckland was an able and conscientious man, but he was rather weak-minded He disliked the pomp and splendour that surrounded his office and was unable to reconcile it with the stark misery and destitution of the Indian people. During his regime, north India was devastated in 1837-38, by a severe famine and, although he spent nearly forty lakhs of rupees on relief measures, as many as eight lakh people perished from starvation. He was a humane person and, as his sister records, nothing in India could elevate his spirits

And yet this quiet man, who had come to India in the hope of following in the footsteps of Bentinck as a peaceful reformer, involved his people in one of the most disastrous and humiliating wars in the East. The Indo-Afghan War was indeed only less ignominious to the British than their defeat at the hands of the Japanese in South-East Asia in 1942 It was a period when conquest was very much in the air. Lord Palmerston, the British Prime Minister, was in the plenitude of his masterful diplomatic career and it became his fixed purpose to secure a pro-British Afghanistan to check-mate the growing influence of Russia in the East. Dost Muhammad, the reigning Amir, was at first well-disposed towards the British and had sent a message of congratulations to Auckland on his arrival in India, seeking the friendship of his Government The Amir was desperately anxious to

regain Peshawar which had been taken from the Afghans by Ranjit Singh in 1834 And since Auckland was not prepared to risk a rupture in the long-standing friendship with the Sikh state to oblige a potential and doubtful ally, Dost Muhammad turned his back on the English, thus furnishing a pretext for the Governor-General to invade Afghanistan and to install the exiled Amir, the British protege, on its throne.

It is impossible to defend the expediency or the justice of Auckland's adventure in Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad certainly provided no proofs of his hostile intentions towards the Indian Government, and the raising of the siege of Herat by Persia in August 1838 deprived the Governor-General of even the flimsiest excuse for his aggression. Even so, with the characteristic wilfulness of a weak man, he committed in December 1838 an army of 21,000 strong, including the puppet Shah Suja's contingent of 6,000, to an adventure that was to produce such ghastly results. All went well during the first phase of the invasion; Kandahar fell into British hands in April 1839, Ghazni in July and Kabul, the capital, in August. But the glory of the conquest was shortlived. In the following year, the Afghans rose and the surrender of their ruler in November 1840 made no difference either to the truculence or the formidable character of the insurrection. The prime-movers in the Afghan episode, Sir Alexander Burnes and Sir William Macnaghten, were murdered, while an army of 16,000, which set out in January 1842 on its return journey, was ruthlessly annihilated by the fierce tribesmen, winter also claiming a large share in deepening the tragedy. Dr. Brydon, the sole survivor of the mortal storm, reached Jalalabad on the 13th to unfold the tragic story to his countrymen there.

At this juncture, Auckland was succeeded by Lord Ellenborough who arrived in India in February 1842. Having previously held the office of President of the Board of Trade, the new Governor-General was well acquainted with the nature of the duties upon which he now entered. He was a brilliant speaker, who loved to listen to his own

voice. Although capable of flashes of real insight, he was 'vain and pompous, overbearing and irascible'. He was obviously not the proper man to meet the situation created by the Kabul disaster. Kandahar, Ghazni and Jalalabad were still in British hands and perhaps a worse disaster would have befallen the invading army if its commanders had listened to the erratic instructions of the new Governor-General. Acting on their own initiative, they retrieved the honour of their nation by recapturing Kabul and by withdrawing from the hostile country without mishap. Ellenborough's thoughtless orders and his foolish directive to the army to bring to India the gates of Mahmud of Ghazni's tomb, supposed to have originally belonged to the temple of Somnath in Gujerat, cost him his office in India.

The loss incurred by the British in men, money and prestige in the Afghan imbroglio was incalculable The war saddled India with a bill for fifteen million pounds and resulted in the loss of five thousand men and sixty thousand camels. Shah Suja, on whose behalf the expedition had been undertaken, was murdered by a nephew in April 1842, while Dost Muhammad, who had been allowed to return to his country, regained his throne and lived up to the ripe age of eighty Commenting on the fruitless adventure of the British in his country, Dost Muhammad rightly complained: 'I cannot understand why the rulers of so great an empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country.' Russia made no trouble for the British during their reverses in Afghanistan, thus confirming the view of many impartial observers that the so-called Muscovite menace was a mere bogey.

Ellenborough, whose self-esteem had been deeply wounded by the failure of his Government in the Afghan War, was determined to win laurels at any cost. He found in Sind a suitable balm to his wounded pride. Sind, which had been converted by his predecessor into a military base for the Afghan campaign, was under the Government of a set of weak, indolent and disunited Amirs who were in-

capable of administering their affairs wisely. Sir Charles Napier, that perfect artist in bellicosity, was entrusted with the congenial task of conquering the province Napier dispensed with the need to invent a pretext for his aggression and, in February 1843, he defeated the Amirs at Miani. Sind now became a British Indian province, the territory of the Mir of Khairpur alone escaping annexation. Though rough-tongued and hot-tempered, Napier was an honest soldier. Commenting on the annexation of Sind, he declared that it was 'a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality.' Elphinstone's condemnation of the episode was equally forthright. Ellenborough, he said from England, annexed Sind in the mood of 'a bully who has been kicked in the streets and goes home to beat his wife in revenge'.[1]

Ellenborough was replaced by Sir Henry Hardinge in 1844, the Directors exercising their constitutional right of recall for the last time. Hardinge was an entirely different person and, like Cornwallis and Moira, belonged to the school of administrators who combined in themselves the rare qualities of statesman and soldier. Besides winning his spurs in the war against Napolean, he had acquired practical experience in public affairs as Secretary-at-War and Chief Secretary for Ireland He was a great innovator and developed the Ganga irrigation system, besides making the first plans for an Indian railway system. His most noteworthy achievement, however, lay in the destruction of the Sikh power. With the passing of Ranjit Singh in 1839, wisdom and moderation had fled the Court of Lahore. Like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Ranjit Singh was the greatest Indian of his generation His empire, which stretched from the Khyber to the Sutlej, including Kashmir, was perhaps the most turbulent area in the whole of the Indian peninsula and yet during his lifetime no serious challenge was offered to his sway, as much on account of his benevolent policy towards all the elements of the population,

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[1]Woodruff, Philip, *THE MEN WHO RULED INDIA THE FOUNDER,* J Cape, 1953, p. 326

as on account of the invincibility of his sword. Like Mahadji Sindhia in our own country and like Augustus Caesar, he was content to keep the substance of power in his own hands, relegating the gauds and glitter of office to minor importance 'As the *regime* grew more stable and time passed,' says the *Oxford History of India*, 'there were glimmerings of a nascent Punjabi nationalism.'[2] But so much depended upon one man's superior qualities of mind and character that the feeling of fraternity and of oneness kindled by him could not be sustained in all its strength after his death.

Indeed, after 1839, the Sikhs became leaderless Their state was transformed into a seething cauldron of anarchy and oppression, the powerful army degenerating into a kind of Praetorian guard—greedy, irresponsible and bellicose. Prince after prince that succeeded Ranjit Singh was put out of existence with the assassin's knife and it became evident that the forces of disintegration could no longer be checked. In 1846, the irrepressible army crossed the Sutlej without 'the formality of alleging a grievance', thus giving a great opportunity for the British to strike a blow at the sovereignty of the only independent state in the country. Friendship with the British, which had been the bedrock of Ranjit Singh's policy, was abandoned, with complete indifference to its consequences. What followed was a short, swift and bloody war, in which the Sikhs showed their customary courage and skill as fighters. Their army was, however, finally broken up at Sobraon on February 10, 1846.

The Punjab now lay prostrate before the British. Though resolute in war, Hardinge showed himself moderate in victory and refrained from taking the extreme measure of annexation. The Sikh state had long served as a buffer against the turbulent inhabitants of the North-West Frontier. The Governor-General was chary of disrupting a system that had served the British interests

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[2]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 613

so well Moreover, the pacification of the conquered territory involved an enormous expenditure which the distracted state of the Company Government's finances could not permit. The Treaty of Lahore, concluded on March 9, 1846, therefore, envisaged the familiar political arrangement with local modifications The infant prince, Dulip Singh, was put on the *gadi* with his mother, Rani Jindan, as Regent. Sir Henry Lawrence was appointed Resident under the treaty and was vested with unlimited authority 'to direct and control every department of the State'. Lawrence was a conscientious and competent administrator who was assisted by a band of young men—Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, James Abbott, Lumsden, Reynell Taylor, George Lawrance, Vans Agnew and Arthur Cocks—who worked like Trojans to restore peace and prosperity in the state At the end of 1846, the mode of administrative control was changed in favour of a regency council consisting of Sikh chiefs under the superintendence and control of the Resident.

The treaty of 1846 also enforced a drastic reduction in the armed strength of the Khalsa and the payment of war reparations amounting to £500,000. In addition, the Jullundhar *doab* and the whole of the Kashmir territory were surrendered to the British The Lahore treasury was empty and there was no means of collecting the stipulated indemnity. Gulab Singh, the Dogra chief of Jammu, offered to pay the British one million pounds sterling and was rewarded by conferring on him and his family the right of hereditary rulership over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It was a bad transaction and proves beyond a shadow of doubt that the political relations of the British Indian Government with the states were governed pre-eminently by expediency and seldom by principles of morality or justice. It would, however, be unhistorical to cite Kashmir as the only example of British 'perfidy'. The manner in which Rampur and Jaora were created to appease the Pindari bandits, Amir Khan and his brother-in-law, hardly redounded to the honour of the arbiters of

India's destiny. The concept that the people too had rights was far too revolutionary to win their approbation.

In the Punjab itself, the government of the province under the nominal sovereignty of a prince was soon found to be unworkable and it fell to Lord Dalhousie to undertake the task of incorporating the state into British India after one more sanguinary conflict with the Sikhs. Dalhousie was hardly thirty-six years old when he arrived in India in 1848. He was an extraordinary man and was endowed with a boundless strength of mind and spirit. Men far more experienced and senior in age, some of whom were themselves makers of history, stood in awe before him and openly acknowledged the superiority of his talents. Dalhousie can be truly acclaimed as the maker of modern India and the political settlements made by him endured in all their essentials till the country's partition in 1947.

Within three months of his arrival in India, the new Governor-General was called upon to grasp the Punjab nettle. The revolt of Dewan Mulraj, the Governor of Multan, in April 1848 was the signal for a widespread uprising throughout the province Dalhousie noted that "the spirit of the whole Sikh people was inflamed by the bitterest animosity against us" and came to the conclusion that their destruction was no longer a question of policy or expediency but 'one of national safety,'[3] On October 10, he declared that 'unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example', the Sikhs had called for war and they would have it After two indecisive but costly battles at Ramnagar and Chillianwalla, the opposing armies met at Gujarat for a final trial of strength. The British won, but, as Dalhousie declared, "we have gained a victory, but like that of the ancients, it is such an one that 'another such would ruin us' ". In another tribute to his adversaries, he said: 'The Sikhs behaved bravely, and stood their ground obstinately... . They were really *singhs* (lions)

[3]*PRIVATE LETTERS OF THE MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE,* edited by J. G A. Baird, Blackwood, 1910, p. 24.

while they stood' But, in spite of their valour, their army was shattered beyond all hope of recovery and what remained of it surrendered to the British in March 1849. Dost Muhammad, who had joined his mortal enemies in the hope of settling his old accounts with the British, ran back to his country too fast to be overtaken! 'However,' says the Governor-General, 'as he came like a thief, he ran away like one; and was chased disgracefully from the land he had invaded.'[4]

The Punjab was annexed and thus the inheritance of the Khalsa passed into British hands. Dalhousie's decision was a wise one, for the retention of the state as a feudatory would have constituted an affront to the memory of the great Ranjit Singh. The impact of the Governor-General's masterful mind was soon felt by the administration of the province which began to be governed so well and wisely that the Mutiny of 1857 found the martial races of the Punjab solidly ranged on the side of their foreign rulers Thenceforward, the province became the most prolific centre of recruitment to the army in India and, despite the country's division, continues to enjoy the distinction of being the sword-arm of the nation.

Since the conclusion of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, uneasy peace prevailed between British India and Burma. The British merchants in Rangoon, forgetting that they were pursuing their profession in a foreign land, had learnt to behave as if the country belonged to them They got up a formal memorial to the Council at Calcutta complaining that they had 'for a long time suffered from the tyranny and gross injustice of the Burmese authorities' in Rangoon Dalhousie was not chary of entertaining the petition of his fellow-countrymen even before ascertaining the legitimacy of their grievances Subscribing to the 'wisdom of Lord Wellesley's maxim that an insult offered to the British flag at the mouth of the Ganges should be resented as promptly and as fully as an insult offered at

[4]*PRIVATE LETTERS OF THE MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE*, edited by J G A Baird, Blackwood, 1910, p 62

the mouth of the Thames', he directed a sea captain to open negotiations with the Burmese Government. The envoy conducted diplomacy on behalf of his government 'successfully to a rupture', thus contributing 'a not very inviting chapter' to the history of British India's relations with Burma.[5] English arms were completely successful and the war ended in the annextion of Pegu in 1852. Dalhousie defended his action by asserting that the acquisition of the Burmese territory became necessary to secure 'adequate compensation for past injury and the best security against future danger'. The Anglo-Burmese war of 1852 marked the real beginning of the British period in Burma.

The Punjab and Pegu were the only two instances where Dalhousie won new territories at the point of the sword, all his other acquisitions, some of them of considerable importance, being made peacefully and by a stroke of the pen. His annexations were certainly large, but there is no evidence for the claim made by many writers on his behalf that he was the greatest annexationist and that he smote state after state out of existence, being impelled by righteous indignation at their misrule. As will be shown presently, he was in fact less forthright than Wellesley in his dealings with the Indian principalities, his attitude towards them being both cautious and conservative. He was by no means an innovator either in enunciating the doctrine of lapse or in chastising misgovernment by annexation. Had he been such a sweeping annexationist as is so categorically claimed on his behalf, free India would not have inherited the problem of states in such heart-breaking complexity Expediency rather than a well-considered and consistent policy guided his relations with the states.

Nevertheless, in the wider interests of the country, all the annexations sanctioned by him were fully justified. The absorption of the three Maratha states of Satara, Nagpur and Jhansi into British India was a belated recognition

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[5]Kaye, John William, *A HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR IN INDIA* (3rd edition), Vol. I, W. H Allen, 1865, p. 66

of the fact that they were entirely wrong as survivals. Much of the bitterness that followed their dissolution could have been avoided if their separate existence had been ended at the appropriate time Moira committed the mistake of believing that Maratha sentiment could be placated by salvaging Satara from the general ruin into which the empire of Shivaji fell. He failed to realise that the recreated principality, petty in size and powerless, would be looked down as a parody on the departed glory of the Marathas and not respected as a symbol of their former greatness The beneficiary himself saw no reason to feel grateful to his benefactors[6] The contribution of Pratap Singh, the rescued Raja, to his people was oppression and misrule which ended in his exile to Banaras in 1839. A good opportunity was thus presented to the Government to rectify its mistake by annexing the state on the legitimate ground of misgovernment. Two years earlier, in January 1837, Sir Robert Grant, Governor of Bombay, had given expression to the prevailing opinion that 'the erection of Satara into a separate principality was a mistaken proceeding' Nevertheless, the state remained, the deposed ruler's brother being elevated to the *gadi.* But both he and his banished brother died without a male issue to maintain the succession In January 1849, the Directors ordered the annexation of Satara by invoking the doctrine of lapse. They declared· 'The result of our deliberations is that we are fully satisfied that by the general law and custom of India a dependent principality, like that of Satara, cannot pass to an adopted heir without the consent of the paramount power; that we are under no pledge, direct or constructive, to give such consent, and that the general interests committed to our charge are best consulted by withholding it'[7] By annexing Satara, the English gained one of the 'finest parts of the Deccan',

[6]Beveridge Henry, *A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF INDIA,* Vol III, Blackie, 1874, p 267

[7]Lee-Warner Sir William, *THE LIFE OF THE MARQUIS OF DALHOUSIE,* Vol II, Macmillan, 1904, p 161.

besides securing the 'continuity of the British territory'. This, it would seem, was the predominant consideration that sealed the fate of the state.

Almost identical reasons were urged for the abolition of Nagpur as a principality. The British would not have been accused of aggression if they had taken over the state after the deposition of Appa Saheb who, as we observed earlier, made a futile bid for independence by making common cause with the fugitive Peshwa, Bajirao. The grandson of Raghuji Bhosle was raised to the *gadi* when he was still a boy. In 1826, Amherst concluded an agreement with the new prince reminding him of his absolute dependence on the mercy of the British Government. 'The Maharaja's *masnad*' he declared, 'was at its disposal.'[8] The Raja died in December 1853 at the age of forty-seven, 'succumbing to a complication of disorders, of which debauchery, cowardice, and obstinacy were the chief......He had no son to succeed him; a posthumous son was an impossibility; and he had not adopted an heir.'[9] Dalhousie was clear in his mind and declared that the state would have been annexed even if there had been an adoption by refusing to recognise it. Nagpur passed under British rule in 1854 'without an audible murmur of discontent' from the people 'except from the recesses of the palace'. Even this minor discontent could have been avoided if the agents of the Government had exercised prudence in the disposal of the Raja's properties. For instance, 'the live-stock and dead stock of the Bhonsle were sent to the hammer', while 'between five and six hundred elephants, camels, horses and bullocks were sold for 1300 pounds'[10] In the case of Nagpur, as in that of Satara, the rights and wrongs of the issues involved were irrelevant. Nagpur was too big a prize to be given up. It consisted of 80,000 square

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[8]Lee-Warner, Sir William, *THE LIFE OF THE MARQUIS OF DALHOUSIE,* Vol. II, Macmillan, 1904, p 178

[9]Kaye John William, *A HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR IN INDIA* (3rd edition), Vol. I, W. H Allen, 1865, p 75

[10]Ibid, p 83 and footnote on p. 84

miles, and its annexation would have yielded an annual revenue of forty lakhs of rupees, besides consolidating the Company's scattered dominions and enclosing Hyderabad in a rig fence. 'The possession of Nagpur,' it was declared, 'would combine our military strength, would enlarge our commercial resources and would materially tend to consolidate our power.' There is a certain finality in such arguments when they are so disarmingly elevated to the plane of self-interest.

The third Maratha principality that fell into Dalhousie's lap was Jhansi, a state situated in Bundelkhand and having an area of 1608 square miles with a population of a quarter of a million. Jhansi, a feudatory of the Peshwa, was transferred to British suzerainty after the deposition of Bajirao. Ramchandrarao won the favour of his new masters by a diligent display of loyalty and, as a reward for his good behaviour, was dignified with the title of Raja. He died in 1835 without heirs, natural or adopted, and the state could well have been taken over without provoking any political or military convulsions. Instead, the deceased Raja's uncle Raghunathrao, a leper and a tyrant, was put on the vacant *gadi*. After three years of disgraceful rule, he too died, leaving none to succeed him. Once again, the British threw away the opportunity of annexing the state, whose government was placed in charge of the deceased Raja's brother, Gangadharao, after putting its affairs in order. After a rule of eleven years, the new chief died in 1854, leaving no son but a young and spirited widow, who became famous as Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi. Giving his reasons for the annexation of the state, Dalhousie observed: 'As it (Jhansi) lies in the midst of other British districts, the possession of it as our own will tend to the improvement of the general internal administration of our posessions in Bundelkhand' The arrangements made for her after the annexation of the state did not suit the Rani who, with rare skill and ability, elevated her personal disappointment to the plane of patriotism. She sided with

[illegible]

within two years, the [illegible] would be forced to interfere by assuming the Government of Oudh, produced no better result. Sleeman, [illegible] in [illegible], and Outram in [illegible], agreed in reporting the deplorable misgovernment of the state. In June [illegible] Dalhousie recorded

that 'for tolerating so long this total disregard of the obligations of solemn treaty, and for all the ills and human suffering which have sprung therefrom, the British Government is heavily responsible'. And yet the same man, who was feared by the princes as a monster with an unlimited appetite for their territories, 'did not think annexation justifiable in view of the fact that no treaty had been broken'.[11] Apart from the obvious inconsistency of these two observations, his Lordship was evidently not much concerned about the welfare and happiness of the people of Oudh Fortunately, the home authorities were firm and the state was duly annexed by proclamation in February 1856. Lee-Warner says that Oudh was merged into British India as an act of State, but, whatever the reason, it became possible for Dalhousie to write. 'So our gracious Queen has 5,000,000 more subjects and £ 1,300,000 more revenue than she had. yesterday' However lukewarm and inconsistent his own attitude to the annexation of Oudh, free India cannot fail to remember gratefully that it was during his regime that the state was merged into the British Indian territories. Its continued existence would have caused much trouble at the time of the transfer of power to Indians

There is no doubt that from the point of view of the area and population of his acquisitions, Dalhousie was the greatest annexationist, but this fact alone, which may well be attributed to favourable circumstances, cannot prove that he was far more forward-looking in his dealings with the states than other energetic rulers like Wellesley and Moira. Ramsay Muir asserts that Dalhousie would 'probably not have hesitated to abolish all the dependent states and bring the whole of India under a single, just, efficient and systematic rule'.[12] This, in all conscience, is a tall claim on behalf of a man who himself disavowed any such

[11] Keith A B Prof, *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA*, Methuen, 1936, p 123

[12] Muir Ramsay, *THE MAKING OF BRITISH INDIA*, University Press, Manchester, 1915, pp. 339-340.

intention. 'No man,' wrote Dalhousie on April 30, 1848, 'can more sincerely deprecate than I do any extension of the frontiers of our territory which can be avoided, or which may not become indispensably necessary from considerations of our own safety, and of the maintenance of the tranquillity of our provinces.'[13]

Dalhousie propounded no new principle or policy for drastically reducing the area of the social wastelands that constituted princely India He did not originate the doctrine of lapse which was anticipated by Wellesley many decades before him.[14] Moreover, in 1834, the Court of Directors had laid down that, wherever it was optional for the Government of India to give or to withhold its assent to adoptions, 'the indulgence should be the exception and not the rule'. Dalhousie's predecessors did not fail to take advantage of this directive by applying the right of lapse to states like Kolaba and Mandvi.

Moreover, there was no justification for the Governor-General's attempt to divide the states into 'sovereign' and 'dependent' principalities for purposes of invoking the doctrine of lapse. It was absurd to recognise the adoption made by the youthful Raja of Karauli, a petty Rajput state, and preserve the principality after his death in 1852, and deny the same right to much bigger and more important states on the untenable ground that the ruling house of Karauli could claim descent from a hoary and mythical ancestor hailing from the celestial regions. Karauli had been a feudatory of the Peshwa, whose rights of sovereignty over the state were acquired by the British after his deposition. It was wrong to make a distinction between one set of states and another merely on grounds of their antiquity or their alleged sovereignty. Lee-Warner, a great champion of Dalhousie, concedes that the British Government had granted protection to numerous principalities 'over which some upstart, some military adventurer,

[13]Kaye John William, *A HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR IN INDIA* (3rd edition), Vol I, W. H. Allen, 1865, pp 73-74

[14]Thompson Edward and Garratt, G T, *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p 229

or some rebellious subject of a former dynasty, had acquired rule by violence'. He adds that the British took the facts as they found them, attempting 'no general investigation into titles.'[15] There were thus no gradations in the subordination of the states to the British Government whose paramountcy over every one of them was absolute. By the application of Dalhousie's definition, Indore was without doubt a 'sovereign' state and yet in 1844 Hardinge had intimated to the newly-appointed Maharaja that 'the state is to descend to the heirs male of his body in lawful succession, and to no others, thus precluding the possibility of adoption'.[16]

Again, the annexation of Oudh was defended by declaring that it would have been a crime against humanity to countenance such scandalous misgovernment in the state. Were misrule and oppression the exclusive infirmities of Oudh? We have it on the authority of Lee-Warner that 'before the Mutiny, the records of their (states') administration were darkened by the graver crimes of murder, cruelty and corruption.'[17] To take the example of Hyderabad, one of the three important 'succession' states, affairs there were 'boiling up into very hot water.' Instead of sending it the way Oudh went and Bengal had gone long before his time, Dalhousie was content to conclude in 1853 what is known as the Treaty of Berar to regulate the payment for the Government of India's contingent in the Nizam's dominions by the cession of Berar. Although the Nizam's Government steadily declined in its standard, he was encouraged to look upon himself as a super-feudatory until the error of his arrogation was brought home to him, first, by Lord Reading and later by Sardar Patel.

Dalhousie could have taken over more states, 'sovereign' and 'subordinate,' if he had so decided. The declaration of

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[15]Lee-Warner, Sir William, *THE LIFE OF THE MARQUIS OF DALHOUSIE,* Vol II, Macmillan, 1904, p. 148.

[16]Hunter, Sir William, *THE MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE,* Oxford University Press, 1890, pp. 145-146.

[17]Lee-Warner, Sir William, *THE PROTECTED PRINCES OF INDIA,* Macmillian, 1894, p. 125.

1841, namely, 'to persevere in the one clear and direct course of abandoning no just and honourable accession of territory or revenue' would have fully supported such a forward policy. Moreover, the reactionary post-Mutiny doctrine 'once a state always a state' was unknown at this time. For instance, Henry Lawrence, Resident in Nepal, toyed with the idea of making a short meal of that independent country by writing in 1845 that 30,000 men could take Nepal in two months 'without chance of failure.' We also read that an attempt was made to persuade Sindhia, the ruler of a 'sovereign' state, to sign its death warrant.[18] What would have happened to Gwalior if the Resident had not protested against the proposal?

These instances are given to show that Dalhousie's division of the states was unrelated to facts and that his attitude towards them was unnecessarily moderate. Indeed, in 1853, he allowed a disputed succession in Bhawalpur to degenerate into a civil war as if the paramount power had no obligations to regulate successions to vacant *gadis* in the feudatory principalities and as if suppression of violence and disorder in any part of the country was not the responsibility of the Supreme Government. In contrast, Wellesley, pursued his policy towards the states with a determination and militancy which even the Directors failed to stop. The Oudh episode, the Treaty of Bassein and the Maratha Wars are instances of the vigour with which he set about establishing the supremacy of the British power in India, no matter what the authorities at home thought about the consequences, financial or other. Dalhousie's policy was far less forthright than his and the fact that more than five hundred principalities survived annexation, is proof enough that what he left undone was truly enormous.

But nothing that has been said in the preceding paragraphs can detract from the greatness of Dalhousie as the man who made the most significant contribution to the

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[18]Panikkar K. M., *AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE RELATIONS OF THE INDIAN STATES WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA*, Hopkinson, 1927, p 107.

emancipation of India from her mediaeval moorings. In this country of vast distances, he revolutionized the modes of transport and communication by introducing the railway and the telegraph, and fostered closer relations among its people by reforming and cheapening the postal service He envisaged the development of India's domestic and overseas trade by planning railways on a large scale so that a network connecting the main inland centres with the ports might ensure the flow of goods both into and from the country. Before he left India, he had the satisfaction of seeing 200 miles of railway working satisfactorily. He could also point to 4,000 miles of telegraph spread over India at a cost of a little over £50 a mile. The first telegraph line from Calcutta to Agra, a distance of 800 miles, was opened in 1854. It was extended to Lahore and Peshawar by 1857. The military, political and commercial gains accruing from these modern amenities were inestimable. A uniform rate of postage, half an anna for letters not exceeding a quarter tola in weight, was introduced throughout the country, the charge being the same irrespective of distance. Before Dalhousie's time, it had cost one rupee to send a letter from Calcutta to Bombay. He set up the Public Works Department to carry out his great development schemes which comprised the extension of irrigation projects, such as the Ganga canal, which had already been begun. His interests and activities were indeed many-sided and there was scarcely a branch of administration, 'from the conserving of forests to the improvement of jails, which did not feel his reforming hand.'

Although they were not realised at the time, the effects of modernising the administration and of introducing India to Western modes of thought and to mechanised transport and communication, were of far-reaching significance. Before the coming of the railways, the man who lived at a distance of two days' journey was almost a foreigner, because distance and remoteness impeded intercourse to a degree that cannot be imagined or understood in the present age of air and space travel The railway and the telegraph not only annihilated distances, but they also

strengthened and vitalized the consciousness of the Indian people about their essential oneness The printing press, which became the means of dispelling illiteracy and of conferring on the masses of the people the power to read and write, the newspapers that purveyed the news of the country and of the world with comments designed to create and educate public opinion, the Western system of education which gave unhindered access to the scientific and other forms of modern knowledge, the spread of trade and commerce, and the intermingling of the people in increasing numbers due to the improved and quick modes of travel, all these served as a powerful unifying force which was eventually transmuted into a strong demand for political rights.

Europe's impact on India would, however, have produced different results if the country did not have a certain measure of pre-existing unity. From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the Bay of Bengal to Bombay, the country is naturally the area of a single government. 'Its vastness,' to quote a British writer, 'does not obscure its oneness; its variety, its unity.' If this had not been so, nothing that Europe could do would have promoted the spirit of oneness among the Indian people. While nationalism in Europe deepened the old divisions, in India it brought her people together. Professor D W. Brogan is quite right when he says: 'The greatest single gift of British rule to India, perhaps the only one, was the creation of India.'

It would, of course, be wrong to give credit to any one person for the birth of great movements or for the release of historic forces, but Dalhousie's share in hastening India's regeneration is by no means inconspicuous. Perhaps, his own contribution to the formulation of the famous Despatch of 1854, said to be the work of Sir Charles Wood, was not much, but the educational scheme envisaged in it had his whole-hearted support. The scheme contained proposals which had been drawn up after taking counsel with such luminaries as Sir Charles Trevelyan, Macaulay's brother-in-law, John Clark Marshman and Alexander Duff. The

Despatch was indeed the 'climax in the history of Indian education; what goes before leads up to it; what follows flows from it.' Briefly, it imposed upon the Government of India the responsibility for building up a properly articulated system of education, covering the entire field from the primary school to the university. It declared that the aim of education in India should be the diffusion of the arts, science, philosophy and literature of Europe. It affirmed its faith in the value of encouraging the study of the Indian languages as the only effective means of spreading light and knowledge among the masses of the people. The emphasis on fostering primary education constituted a virtual repudiation of the 'filtration theory.' The Despatch endorsed the proposal made a few years before, for the establishment of universities in India on the model of London University. Thus, as we saw in the previous chapter, three universities came into existence in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in the year of the Mutiny. The first university entrance examination was held at Calcutta 1857 when 244 candidates appeared, with 162 declared successful. In the following year, thirteen candidates appeared for the first degree examination. Only two were successful, one of them being the celebrated Bengali novelist and author of the song *Bande Mataram*, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.[19] Dalhousie's special contribution was the establishment of an Engineering College at Roorkee and the Calcutta Medical College.

If the Wood Despatch was a landmark in the history of Indian education, the Act of 1854 represented an important piece of legislation. The East India Company, which was forced to fight a rearguard action on all occasions when its Charter was renewed, was now left with a 'political husk which hardly concealed the actual control of the Crown.' Relief was afforded to the over-worked Governor-General and his Council by creating the office of Governor to administer the affairs of Bengal. The legislative provisions of

[19] *THE REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMISSION*, December 1948 - August 1949, Vol. I, p. 18.

the Act were also of great importance. Changes were made in the working of the Council with a view to differentiating its function of legislation from that of administration. Responding to Macaulay's suggestion, the legislative member of the Council was given full rank with voting power in all business A kind of toy Parliament was set up by enlarging the Council, to consist of the Governor-General, the Commander-in-Chief, the four members of the Council, a representative of each Presidency or Lieutenant Governorship, selected from civilians of at least ten years' standing by the head of the local government, the Chief Justice of Bengal and another Judge of the Supreme Court. Two more civilians could be admitted to the Council, but the provision was not availed of. Indians were given no representation on the convenient ground that it was 'impossible' to select suitable men[20] Although it consisted of men of undoubted loyalty and moderation, the deliberations of the Council often irked and irritated the authorities, who saw to it that the 'anomaly' was remedied in 1861.

Dalhousie's term of office (1848-56) was truly a memorable one. He is entitled to our respect, not on account of the doctrine of lapse, which he did not invent, nor even because of his annexations, which were not large enough, seeing that a bewildering medley of states were still left to hamper India's unity and progress, but because he helped the country to wake up from its long slumber, to shake off its infirmities and eventually to take its place in the comity of free nations. It is idle to ask whether the modern appurtenances of civilization, represented by the railway and the telegraph, were introduced in India as an act of disinterested generosity; whatever the motive, it cannot be gainsaid that India rediscovered her oneness almost entirely on account of them and as a result of her coming, for the first time after many centuries, under a single frame of government. 'Wellesley,' says the *Oxford History of*

[20]Keith A B., *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA*, Methuen, 1936, p. 138.

India, 'had acquired much territory and displayed singular drive and purpose but Dalhousie spent more energy in organising than in acquiring.'[21] There cannot be a juster tribute than this. Dalhousie has been accused of being an unwitting instigator of the 'Sepoy Mutiny' but that is the verdict of men who were angry at the uprising. History has not branded him so.

[21]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 661.

6. LORD CANNING

DALHOUSIE retired from India in February 1856 and was succeeded by Lord Canning, his contemporary at Oxford. Various accounts have come down to us about Canning's character and capacity. His critics, angered by his moderation in the handling of the outbreak of 1857, have condemned him as a man who was incapable of rising to the heights of masterful leadership when confronted with grave crises and emergencies. His refusal to mete out barbarous punishment to the insurgents indiscriminately and on a mass scale infuriated, not only most of his contemporary countrymen, especially in India, but also those aggressive historians who would have much desired him to plunge this country into another officially-sanctioned holocaust. Canning was by no means excessively soft when suppressing the mutiny. Nevertheless, he was a good man, highly connected, cultured and intelligent, whose own inclinations had been in favour of leaving behind him a legacy of peace and of efficient government in India. He was, however, destined to deal with one of the most serious and sanguinary turmoils that ever occurred during the British rule in this country.

More than a century has elapsed since what is generally known as the Sepoy Mutiny broke out and yet the happenings of those distant days continue to exercise men's minds. The essential facts about the outbreak, which flamed into such a formidable revolt, are neither in doubt nor in controversy. At no time since the British became the political masters of India were they regarded with love and affection. Notwithstanding its grave faults, their administration was far more efficient than most of the Indian governments before it and it was perhaps necessary that this country should be apprenticed to their rule over a period of years as a prelude to the realisation of its destiny. Even so, it is impossible to ignore the brutal fact that the Englishman

in India was a foreigner and that, having chosen to remain so for ever, he could not in the nature of things expect to command the willing or spontaneous loyalty of the people. Moreover, the attitude and outlook of many Englishmen in the country made any such understanding and cordiality almost impossible.

For the first time during the long and chequered history of this country, its entire population was reduced to the status of a subject people, with no rights or privileges of their own when ranged against those of their foreign masters. *Pax Britannica* granted them peace and security, but the blessing cost them their dignity and honour. Fair-minded observers like Munro had declared that it was useless to expect any elevation of character from a people whose entire activity was confined to a mere 'animal state of thriving in peace'[1] Indians could not hope to rise to positions of trust and responsibility in the service of their own country, although the Charter Act of 1833 had assured them that they would not be 'disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the Company.' Twenty years later, another statute, the Charter Act of 1853, reiterated the assurance, but such promises had no counterpart in action. The doors of the covenanted civil service had remained closed to Indian nationals till the passing of the Act of 1861, but even after that year the doctrine of gradualness was carried to such extremes that the Indian element of the service could not hope to attain parity with its British counterpart earlier than 1939[2] The position of Indians in an army called 'Indian' was even worse. It was essentially a 'sepoy' army, in which the commissioned ranks were strictly reserved for British officers. There was employment in the army for Indians, but there were no careers for them, in spite of the fact that a good number of them had distinguished military traditions. A British

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[1]Gleig G R, *THE LIFE OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR THOMAS MUNRO,* Vol I, Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830, pp 465, 466.

[2]Blunt Sir Edward, *THE I C. S THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE,* Faber & Faber, 1937, p. 52.

subaltern could order about the senior-most subedar, a non-commissioned officer of the highest rank to which an Indian soldier could rise, although in point of age and service the latter could well look upon his youthful superior as his grandson.

Apart from its policy of excluding Indians from important positions, the Government became increasingly indifferent towards their opinions and susceptibilities. Macaulay made no bones about making the preposterous claim that his people represented the 'hereditary aristocracy of mankind.' The expansion of the British rule until it comprehended the entire Indian peninsula stimulated the apostolic zeal of the Christian missionaries, who, in an address widely circulated in Bengal during the closing years of Dalhousie's administration, declared that the time had come when 'earnest consideration should be given to the question, whether or not all men should embrace the same system of religion.'[3] The motive behind the desire to promote a common religion in India was clear. Marshman asserted with admirable candour that 'every converted Hindu or Mohamadan is necessarily the cordial friend of the British, on the gounds of his own interest and security; for on the continuance of their empire in India his very existence depends.' The spiritual redemption of the converts, if such a thing could at all be possible by mere apostasy, had obviously little or no place in such a scheme of things In his Autobiography, Debendranath Tagore narrates with indignation how in 1845 a Hindu family in Calcutta was waylaid and forcibly converted to Christianity.[4] Many colonels in the army, who ought to have known better, openly played the part of military vicars, preaching the excellence of Christianity to their sepoys, who were offered every inducement to discard their ancestral faith. 'Conscientiously imprudent,' says Kaye, 'they believed that it was their duty to render unto God

[3]Kaye Sir John, *A HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR IN INDIA*, Vol I, W. H. Allen, 1865, p. 472.

[4]*THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MAHARSHI DEBENDRANATH TAGORE*, Macmillan, 1916, p. 98.

the just tribute of an apostolic activity.' He adds: 'Holding fast to the wages of the State, they went about with the order book in one hand and the Bible in the other; and thus they did a great and grievous wrong to the Government they professed to serve.'[5] The sepoys had thus good reason to feel that, besides being called upon to sacrifice their lives and limbs in the service of their masters and to do all the dirty and menial jobs for them, they were required to abandon their most cherished belief in God in the manner taught to them by their ancestors.

The common man had also little reason to be grateful to the British. As we shall see in the course of this chapter, the whole basis of his economic life was in the process of disintegration as a result of the conquest of the Indian market by the British manufacturers. The disruption of the hand and household industries, which had from time immemorial ensured the enrichment and the diversification of the national economy, imposed a heavy burden on agriculture which eventually became India's sole source of wealth. The sharp increase in the assessment of the land revenue, often in disregard of the capacity of the peasant to pay, and the dispossession of a great number of land-holders, particularly in the North-Western Provinces, had the most unsettling effect on the minds of a people who were already perturbed by the revolutionary changes that were taking place in the modes of travel and communication and by the introduction of reforms calculated to beak the crust of tradition and conservatism.

The general unrest that thus prevailed in large parts of the country was aggravated by the vagaries that marked the annexationist policy of the Government. No well-defined and easily understood principles were laid down to allay the apprehensions of the princes and their dependent aristocracy about the continuance of their privileged position. Without accomplishing much, Dalhousie had merely succeeded in exciting their panic that the Company had in

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[5]Kaye Sir John, *A HISTORY OF THE SEPOY WAR IN INDIA*, Vol. I, W. H Allen, 1865, pp. 479, 480

fact embarked upon universal 'usurpation'. The annexation of Oudh, while it inflamed Muslim opinion, caused almost equal resentment among the Hindu elements of the Bengal army, drawn mostly from that province. The merger of the state into British India had deprived most of the sepoys of this army of some of the privileges they had long enjoyed.

It is clear from the recital of the circumstances that led to the outbreak of the mutiny that Dalhousie was by no means greatly responsible for the outbreak Challenge to British rule was inherent in the situation and the acts of omission and commission on the part of any one statesman could not deflect the course of history. Indians were never fully reconciled to British dominion and the rebellion of 1857 was preceded by many outbreaks, though of lesser intensity, both by civilians and by men of the armed forces. The episode of the greased cartridges merely supplied the spark for the conflagration

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the uprising and of the manner in which it was suppressed Although military unrest was discernible from the beginning of 1857, the actual outbreak occurred on May 10 at Meerut. Delhi fell on the following day — a fact which gave considerable prestige to the insurgents. The rebellion spread rapidly to many centres in Northern India and all vestiges of civil authority were obliterated in most of them. But the victory of the rebels was short-lived. With the fall of Gwalior on June 20, 1858, the mutiny virtually came to an end, making it possible for Canning to proclaim peace on July 8. It is impossible to defend the excesses committed by the rebels in places like Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur and Jhansi, nor can any valid excuse be urged in defence of the primeval ferocity with which the revolt was suppressed. "Everywhere," says a writer, "retributive torture was advocated. Subalterns sat on billiard tables discussing till the early hours of the morning suitable punishments of rebel leaders The walls of the mess dining-rooms were covered with charcoal drawings of a crowd of torturers

applying their skill to the prostrate body of Nana Saheb, and with a series of vengeful verses in which 'wife and daughter' rhymed meritably with 'slaughter'. The English press discussed the situation with a ferocious hysteria, compared to which General Goerings' most unbalanced outbursts would seem polite commonplaces. No one seems to have thought it necessary to tell the soldiers that the war was against certain rebels and not against the population of India."[6] Even Canning could not always keep his head cool. Writing to the Lieutenant-Governor at Agra in May 1857, he said: 'No amount of severity can be too great.' In the same month, he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief: 'I should rejoice to hear that there had been no holding our men, and that the vengeance had been terrible.'[7] The stakes were enormous and Canning was no less anxious than his countrymen to preserve the empire at any cost. The prospect of England sinking into insular insignificance was too frightening to be contemplated with equanimity. The upshot of the mutiny, among many other consequences, was an enduring estrangement between the peoples of the two countries. 'We hate,' wrote Harold Laski, 'none so deeply as those whom we have grievously wronged.'

In spite of its formidable character, the failure of the insurrection was inevitable. It lacked the support and the sanctions of a national movement. At the time of its outbreak, the total military strength of the Company was 238,000, of whom only 38,000 were Europeans. A large proportion of the sepoys remained aloof from the conflict, while the Sikhs, the Punjabis, the Gurkhas and many other Indian elements in the army gave active support to the English. By rendering military assistance to Dost Muhammad in recovering Herat from the Persians, Canning had earlier secured India against Afghan invasion during the mutiny. Large parts of the country, including

[6]Kincaid Dennis, *BRITISH SOCIAL LIFE IN INDIA*—1608-1937, George Routledge, 1938, p 187.
[7]Cunningham Sir H S, *EARL CANNING*, Clarendon Press, 1891, p 118.

the newly conquered Punjab, Kashmir, Southern India, Rajasthan and the Bombay Presidency, remained quiet and showed remarkable indifference towards the happenings in the North. The sepoys signally failed to unite among themselves and were unable to produce competent men who could lead them to victory. The uprising was negative and aimless and lacked the advantage that comes from careful preparation and planning.

The outlook of the civilian leaders that took part in the rebellion was scarcely more constructive. As pointed out before, the chief complaint of Nana Saheb against the British was their refusal to continue the ex-Peshwa's pension to him. He would probably have been lost to the movement if the British had favoured his petition. Kunwar Singh, the eighty-year old Rajput Talukdar of Jagdishpur near Arrah, had long been a trusted friend of the British and he would probably have remained so if his personal interests had not been adversely affected. The celebrated Rani of Jhansi fought and died the death of a heroine in an effort to regain the annexed state of her deceased husband The nominal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, who was eighty-two years of age, had neither the desire nor the ability to serve as a rallying-point for the insurgents. At that ripe old age, he was probably far more interested in winning a cosy resting place in the other world than in embarking upon the futile and dangerous adventure of regaining the throne of his ancestors. And yet this peace-loving old man found himself bolstered up as a reluctant and bewildered leader of the mutineers. Tatia Tope, who distinguished himself as an inspired guerilla leader, and Nana Saheb's faithful servant Azimulla, were probably among the few prominent insurgents who had no personal accounts to settle with the British. 'It is an undeniable fact,' says Dr. R. C Majumdar, 'that all the leading figures in that great outbreak were alienated from the British for private reasons.'[8] Most of the prominent

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[8]Majumdar R C, *THE SEPOY MUTINY AND THE REVOLT OF 1875,* S. Chaudhari, Calcutta, 1957 p. 225.

princely states, including Hyderabad, Gwalior and Baroda, remained steadfast in their loyalty to the British connection, while the Sikh principalities of the Punjab unreservedly placed their material and man-power resources at the disposal of their overlords for the suppression of the mutiny. From the first, the scales had thus been heavily weighted against the insurgents.

Taking a long-range view of the episode, it is perhaps good that India did not win her independence in such an unplanned and sanguinary manner. 'As I read about the events of 1857,' wrote Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, 'I am forced to the sad conclusion that Indian national character had sunk very low. The leaders of the revolt could never agree. They were mutually jealous and continually intriguing against one another.'[9] But even assuming that, by means of concerted action, they could secure independence for the country, they would, on account of their outlook and upbringing, have inevitably striven to re-establish a social and political order, on which India had finally turned her back. There was neither patriotism nor progress in seeking the restoration of the Moghul Empire, with all its oppressions and barbaric splendour. Nor was it possible to look upon men like Nana Saheb as exemplars of Indian nationalism in preference to leaders like Raja Ram Mohun Roy. India had stepped into the modern world and it was useless to seek her political emancipation through outmoded leadership and by means of equally out-of-date ideas and ideals.

In any case, it would perhaps have been impossible for India to retain her freedom so won for any length of time. Even if, by a miracle, it could throw up an inspired leader capable of holding the country together, it is inconceivable that its military strength would have been equal to the task of repelling new invasions either by the British or by other Western Powers. England, which had tasted

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[9]Sen Surendranath with Foreword by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-SEVEN*, Publication Division, Ministry of Information, Govt. of India, 1957, p XV.

imperial glory in India for a century, would not have let go so great a prize before making a desperate bid to regain it. The industrial revolution in Europe, of which Britain was the earliest and the greatest beneficiary, had put irresistible power into the hands of the Europeans who had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, come into the plenitude of their imperial heritage. The mechanisation of industry had rendered them the most powerful arbiters of human destiny. The machines which, from the outset, outstripped the intention of their makers, demanded perennial and ever-expanding markets for the goods turned out by them on a mass scale, thus confirming Emerson's prophetic warning that 'things are in the saddle and ride mankind'.

The opening up of Japan to the outside world by Commodore Perry of America in 1853 by breaking her isolation that had lasted for 216 years, was indeed part of the new movement. The result was most amazing. 'Japan', says H. G. Wells, 'embraced the West with such enthusiasm that 'she made all European progress seem sluggish and tentative by comparision'. European intervention in China was an unmitigated disaster and culminated in the Opium War of 1839 which was fought to 'preserve the rights of trade' by the Western Powers in that country. The nineteenth century also saw an unexampled scramble for territories in the continent of Africa, the whole of which soon came under the sway of the white man. It was indeed an era of European conquest and expansion and only a miracle could have preserved India's integrity had it been regained in 1857.

The British Government was determined not to throw away the lessons taught by the ordeal of 1857. It realised, though belatedly, the unwisdom and the danger of allowing a trading corporation to perform the functions of a sovereign in a country of continental size like India. In any case, since 1833 the Company had lost its commercial character and had become a mere 'husk of its former self'. But the decision to put an end to the anomaly of 'double

Government' evoked a strong protest by the Company on whose behalf a 'weighty and dignified' petition was presented to both Houses of Parliament in February 1858 pleading against its abolition. John Stuart Mill employed his powerful pen in vain on behalf of the doomed body. Both the political parties in Parliament were determined to bring the Indian administration under the direct control of the Crown in conformity with the 'inevitable consequences of time, change and progress'. The Act 'for the better government of India' was accordingly passed and received the Royal assent on August 2, 1858. Realising the futility of further opposition to the change, the Directors commended their great 'trust' to the Queen. 'Let Her Majesty', they declared, 'appreciate the gift—let her take the vast country and the teeming millions of India under her direct control; but let her not forget the great corporation from which she has received them nor the lessons to be learnt from its success'. No change in the title of the Queen accompanied the transfer of government. Strange fears and forebodings delayed the proclamation of Victoria as Queen Empress till January 1, 1877. The great name of the imperial Moghuls had by then begun to slide into oblivion, the aged Bahadur Shah having died a British prisoner at Pegu.

The Government of India Act of 1858 declared that the country was to be administered directly by and in the name of the Crown, acting through a Secretary of State, who would be vested with the powers formerly exercised by the Court of Directors and the Board of Control. He was to be assisted by a Council of fifteen members, eight of whom were to be appointed by the Crown and the remainder by the Directors The majority of both categories were to be persons who had served or resided in India for ten years and must not, as a rule, have left this country more than ten years before appointment. It was further laid down that in future, at least nine members must be so qualified The creation of the Council of India and the prescription of the qualifications of its members

were intended to afford the Secretary of State the benefit of advice from able and experienced men, intimately associated with Indian affairs. For some time, the system served the useful purpose of providing a link between past and present, but with the passage of years, when India began to move faster, the inadequacy of members with their minds anchored to the dead past became painfully obvious. Nevertheless, no great harm was done, as the India Council was only an advisory body. Real power was held by the Secretary of State who remained the 'fountain of authority as well as the director of policy in India'.

The new regime was proclaimed on November 1, 1858, but the change made no difference so far as the people of this country were concerned. None of the assurances conveyed to them through the proclamation were new and were, in fact, a mere reaffirmation of those given by earlier documents like the Charter Acts. The legal title of the Governor-General remained unchanged, although the honorific of Viceroy was added to it. In later decades full advantage was taken by the princes of this appanage in order to make, as will be proved in another chapter, the preposterous claim that their political relations rested, not with the Government of India for the time being, but with the distant Crown of England. From the point of view of popular aspirations, the transfer of government was a singularly sterile measure, as it failed to take note of the historic role which the newly-created class of educated Indians was destined to play. These forward-looking men had kept themselves scrupulously aloof from the uprising of 1857 and some of them had in fact suffered terribly for refusing to countenance the reversion of the country to mediaevialism. In the pacification that followed the suppression of the rebellion, the forerunners of India's independence found themselves left high and dry. Indeed, the greatest beneficiaries of the British triumph were the princes

The behaviour of 'princely India' during the mutiny served as an eye-opener to the British. Few of the

leading states had taken sides with the insurgents, while many of them had contributed their all to quell the uprising. The princes had proved themselves the greatest bastions of British rule in India. Truly did Canning describe them as the 'break-waters of the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave'. The Queen, therefore. needed little persuasion to give them solemn assurances that 'all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the East India Company are by us accepted and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part'. Her Gracious Majesty was further pleased to say: 'We shall respect the rights, dignity, and honour of the native princes as our own'. Loyal chiefs were rewarded with titles and gifts of money or lands [10]

Perhaps, the greatest favour conferred on them was the guarantee that their principalities would not be annexed on any account. In 1860, Canning distributed 160 sanads of adoption among the princes and seventeen were added to this number by Lord Lansdowne in 1890. There was universal jubilation among the princes and their dependants whose reaction to British generosity was one of profound relief and gratitude. A leading member of their Order, the Maharaja of Gwalior, gave public expression to their feeling when he declared: 'Now that annexation is at an end, we breathe freely, even when our failings are proved and our shortcomings discussed.'[11] There could not have been a more damaging admission on the part of the princes about their helpless dependence on the paramount power. And yet, with the passage of time, when they felt secure in the enjoyment of their delegated authority, they made bold to claim for themselves the attributes of sovereignty, conveniently forgetting their unedifying past.

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[10] *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 678.

[11] Kulkarni V.B, *THE FUTURE OF INDIAN STATES*, Thacker, 1944, p. 15.

A new relationship was thus established between the British Government in India and its feudatories which completely ignored the wants and wishes and the rights and privileges of the states' people. Its mercenary character is made evident by the description of Professor Westlake who says: 'There is good reason to believe that both by them and us a comradeship in difficulty and danger is indeed felt, such a comradeship as engages the strenuous and loyal exertions of a ship's crew under the categorical imperative of the captain'.[12] The effects of the new system were soon felt in a number of states. Secure in the knowledge that, however reckless their behaviour, the integrity of their states would not be threatened, the princes lost all interest and initiative in administering their affairs well and wisely. Indeed, the substitution of the mild corrective of intervention for outright annexation, put a premium on misrule. For instance, the depravity of Malharrao Gaekwar of Baroda knew no restraint, and yet his deposition in 1875 was considered an adequate remedy for the gross misrule to which the state had long been exposed. It was the ruler for the time being and not the state that was punished. Again, in 1891, Manipur deserved confiscation for the political crimes of its 'heir-apparent'. Although the Jubraj was hanged, the state escaped his fate! Who could deny that the states had become an integral factor in the imperial organisation of India?

Fair-minded observers sincerely regretted the new arrangement, as it was so openly inimical to progress. 'It is impossible', wrote Sir Henry Cotton in his book *New India or India in Transition*, 'to imagine a more sensitive body than our Indian princes. They are consumed by petty jealousies among themselves, by questions of precedence, of salutes, of the strength of their armies. The example of one chief is infectious, the others cannot be outdone, and thus they vie with one another in their

[12]Westlake Professor, edited by Prof Oppenheim, *COLLECTED PAPERS ON INTERNATIONAL LAW*, p 632

enthusiastic receptions of the Viceroy on his occasional visits, and in the display of those barbaric attributes of loyalty which are the surest passport for recognition and favour from the Government'.[13] Time brought no change in the deplorable indifference of the princes towards their obligations as rulers. Not accustomed to using strong language, even Mahatma Gandhi felt constrained to arraign them as so many Hitlers who could shoot and kill their helpless subjects with impunity. His repeated pleas to them not to ignore popular opinion in their states were brushed aside. Reform was indeed impossible unless the alliance that had been forged between them and the British was terminated—a goal that could be realised only with the attainment of national freedom.

The British Government showed similar foresight and thoroughness in dealing with the army. With the termination of the Company's rule, its European troops automatically passed under the Crown. Canning's suggestion for maintaining a separate European army in India was over-ruled. Their transfer to the royal regiments was deeply resented by many of the European troops who had developed intimate ties in this country. They demanded re-engagement and bounty as a condition of the transfer of their services, and, failing to get these terms, were offered their discharge. Their clamour in 1859 for better terms was imaginatively described as the 'white mutiny'. The demonstration invited a good deal of derision and was called the 'Dumpy Mutiny' on account of the small stature of the recruits enlisted during the rebellion.[14]

The Indian portion of the army was reformed with the object of ensuring that the sepoys would never again be able to endanger the security of the British Raj. The strength of the European troops was greatly increased, their proportion to the Indian element being fifty-fifty in the Bengal army and one to two in the armies of the Pre-

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[13]Kulkarni V.B., *THE FUTURE OF INDIAN STATES*, Thacker, 1944, p. X.

[14]Ilbert Sir Courtenay, *THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1922, pp. 97, 98.

sidencies of Bombay and Madras. By 1863, when the re-organisation was completed there were in India 65,000 European troops as against 140,000 Indians. The Indian artillery, which had caused considerable damage to the British during the mutiny, was disbanded. Great care was taken in the selection of recruits and, as we shall see in a later chapter, the doctrine of counterpoise and the theory of martial and non-martial races were enunciated for the first time to ensure the non-admission of 'seditious' and 'disloyal' elements into the armed forces. The Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province became the chief recruiting centres, thus accentuating the unrepresentative character of the army.

Canning's term of office after the Mutiny was marked by abounding legislation The Indian Councils Act of 1861 remodelled the Governor-General's Executive Council and expanded it to contain five members. Power was retained to appoint the Commander-in-Chief as an extra-ordinary member. Each member of the Council was given specific departments whose business was normally transacted by him under the orders of the Governor-General. Only matters of exceptional importance or those in doubt or dispute were placed before the Council for decision. The Governor-General himself held charge of the foreign portfolio and dealt with India's correspondence with her neighbours. He also supervised the affairs of the feudatory states. In matters concerning the safety, tranquillity or interests of 'the British possessions in India,' he was vested with powers to overrule his Council. The grant of such plenary powers to the Governor-General was in consonance with the provisions of much older statutes, namely, the Acts of 1786 and 1793.[15] Nevertheless, the portfolio system, besides conducing to an expeditious despatch of business, contributed to the shaping of the Central Government in its modern form.

[15] *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, pp. 230.

The new system also permitted the appointment of experts for specific subjects In 1859, James Wilson, formerly Secretary to the Treasury and Vice-President of the Board of Trade, was appointed on the Governor-General's Council to remodel the system of financial administration. Wilson was a leading economist of the day, and the havoc caused by the Mutiny to the finances of the Government gave him ample work. He, however, died after holding office for eight months and his place was taken by Samuel Laing, a Member of Parliament. The Mutiny had increased the Indian debt from £56 million to £98 million. Neither this fact nor the recurring deficits in revenue daunted Laing who claimed that 'the revenue of India is really buoyant and elastic to an extraordinary degree'. Some historians hold that the work of Wilson and Laing marks the beginning of modern Indian finance.

The Act of 1861 substantially modified the composition and powers of the Legislative Council of 1853. For legislative purposes, the Governor-General's Council was enlarged to contain from six to twelve additional members who were nominated by the Governor-General for a period of two years. At least one-half of this number were to be non-officials. Although the statute contained no specific provision for the nomination of Indians to the Legislative Council, an assurance was given in the House of Commons that due representation would be given to them. The functions of the new Council were strictly limited to legislation and it was forbidden to transact any other business. The object of this provision was to 'protect' the Central Government from inconvenient criticism and to prevent the new body from arrogating to itself the role of a parliamentary opposition. Neither Dalhousie nor Canning had shown much tolerance when their Government was criticised in the old Council. The Act of 1861 restored to the Governments of Madras and Bombay the power of legislation which had been taken away from them by the Charter Act of 1833.

The year 1861 also saw the passing of the Indian Civil Service Act, the main object of which was to validate all appointments made in the civil service of India in disregard of the provisions of the Charter Act of 1793. The legislation was also intended to make the service attractive to men of high ability. The Indian Civil Service, which became famous for the outstanding abilities of its members, had a modest beginning. Formerly known as the covenanted civil service, its earliest recruits were factors and their assistants who were sent out from England to administer the Company's affairs in this country. Those were halcyon days for the Company's servants, most of whom managed to make large fortunes. Cornwallis made a serious attempt to separate the commercial and revenue branches of the administration and to minimise corruption by securing adequate salaries for the Company's employees. He, however, laid down the pernicious precedent that no Indian should be appointed to any high office. Wellesley, as we have seen, set up a college at Calcutta for educating the recruits to the Indian administrative services, as most of them came to this country in what he called an 'exposed and destitute condition'. But his venture was cold-shouldered by the home authorities and the Calcutta College continued its uneventful career as a language school for the civil servants of Bengal till 1854 when it was closed down. The essential soundness of Wellesley's project was, however, appreciated, though not acknowledged, by the Directors who founded in 1806 the 'East India College' at Haileybury where youths who had received nominations were given training for two years. The need for enlisting Indians to the civil service was never considered by the policy-makers. In fact, nothing was done to repeal the provisions of the Act of 1793, which reserved all posts worth more than £500 a year to the covenanted servants of the Company who were, as a rule, Europeans. There was no improvement in the situation even under the Charter Act of 1853, although it threw the covenanted civil service open to Indians.

From the time Indian opinion became articulate, it began to plead for a two-fold reform in the services of the country. It asked that the age for competition should not be lowered, as such a measure was demonstrably unfair to Indian candidates who had to offer themselves for examination in a language that was not their own and in a place thousands of miles away from their homes. In the interests of fair competition, it was urged that the examinations for the Indian Civil Service should be held simultaneously in India and England—a plea the validity of which was belatedly recognised by Parliament in 1893. As early as 1861, the India Council asked for the latter reform, while the Indian National Congress became the most pertinacious advocate for the nationalisation of the services since its establishment in 1885.[16]

Satyendra Nath Tagore was the first Indian to enter the Indian Civil Service which he joined in 1864. Four more joined him in 1871, their names being Surendranath Banerjea, Romesh Chander Dutt, Behari Lal Gupta and Shripad Babaji Thakur. A prophet of Indian nationalism, Surendranath Banerjea has left a vivid record of the trials and tribulations encountered by young Indians in his time both before passing the examination and after entering the service. He himself was grievously wronged by his dismissal from the service on absurd grounds, the real reason being the mortification felt by a senior British officer, consequent on his failure in the departmental examinations, while his junior colleague, an Indian, passed them rapidly. Writes Banerjea: 'Mr. Posford, who was my senior as Assistant Magistrate, and myself appeared together at the departmental examination. I passed; he failed. He was my senior by two years. He was a European and I was an Indian'. Banerjea adds: 'My success was the cause of my official ruin'.[17] Romesh Chander Dutt, another brilliant

[16]Sitaramayya B. Pattabhi Dr., *THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS,* Indian National Congress, Vol. I., p. 30.

[17]Banerjea Sir Surendranath, *A NATION IN MAKING,* Oxford University Press, 1925, p 27.

man, 'never rose beyond the position of an officiating Commissioner of a Division', although, after quitting the Indian Civil Service, he became the Dewan or Prime Minister of Baroda. No less a person than Gopal Krishna Gokhale gave public expression to his indignation at the raw deal that was being given to Indians in the matter of their recruitment to the services. Speaking at the fifth session of the Congress, he declared: 'The terms of the enactment of 1833 and the proclamation of 1858 are so explicit that those who now try to withhold the privileges then assured to us must be prepared to face the painful dilemma of hypocrisy or treachery, must be prepared to admit that England was insincere when she made those promises or that she is prepared to break faith with us now'.[18]

During the expansive days of the Company, its servants became the best paid civil service in the world and had assiduously built themselves up into a close corporation. It is not easy to change an attitude of mind in which pride and privilege predominate. As pointed out earlier, the process of 'Indianisation' was so carefully planned that it would perhaps have taken more than a century for the nationals of this country to attain a substantial majority in the Indian Civil Service. The war and freedom, however, put an end to the misapplied doctrine of gradualness. The partition of the country and its independence in 1947 resulted in the exodus of the European and Muslim officers of the service. As many as 600 out of 1,000 civil servants are estimated to have left. The tremendous depletion in such an essential service was, however, made good by means of emergency recruitment through a Board set up in the middle of 1948. The Indian Administrative Service has been constituted to take the place of the I.C.S, except that it does not provide officers for the Judiciary. Recruitment to the I.A.S. and the Indian Police Service is made through all-India competitive examinations.

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[18]Sitaramayya B. Pattabhi Dr., *THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS*, Vol I, Indian National Congress, 1946, p. 31.

It is, however, impossible to withhold the tribute of admiration from the I.C.S. when writing its epitaph. It was perhaps too much to expect the British personnel to appreciate the rising tempo of nationalism in the country. Even such an innocuous constitutional measure as the *Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms* was viewed by it with profound disquiet Nevertheless, by its devoted labours and scrupulous regard for efficiency, the Indian Civil Service was able to hand over a splendid legacy of competent administration to free India. To-day, a great part of the administrative burden of guiding the country along the path of progress and prosperity is being borne by a small and rapidly dwindling group of senior Indian civilians, who are manfully shouldering their heavy responsibilities, being sustained by the knowledge that they are working for a truly noble cause.

A few more landmarks in Canning's regime may be noted. The contemplated merger of the supreme and *sadr* courts, representing respectively the jurisdiction of the Crown and the Company, was accomplished by the passing of the Indian High Courts Act of 1861, under the provisions of which High Courts were established in each Presidency. Macaulay's Penal Code, originally drafted in 1837 and revised by Sir Barnes Peacocke, was enacted in 1860 and was followed by the Code of Criminal Procedure in the following year.

The period between Plassey and the assumption of the government of India by the Crown of England marks an important phase in the Indo-British connection. It was a period of many-sided and memorable achievements. The country, which had degenerated into a vast wilderness of chaos and misrule, was rescued from these evils and given the inestimable blessings of the rule of law for the first time in its long and troubled history. Also for the first time, after many centuries, it came under the government of a single power which found it necessary in its own interest to keep its charge in a high state of efficiency. Besides giving India a well-organised system

of administration, the British courageously suppressed many of the obnoxious social practices, such as *sati*, which had long afflicted and disgraced Hinduism. Even the imported system of education, in spite of its defects and drawbacks, was of great value in unfolding new intellectual horizons and in creating a new class of educated Indians who became the apostles of Indian nationalism. Gradually and inevitably, the country moved into the spacious arena of world polity, albeit under the tutelage of the British.

India, which was thus making progress in so many directions, however, suffered a serious setback to her economic life. The poverty and the distress of the people increased in spite of the country's apprenticeship to an enlightened and forward-looking government. The reason for this seeming paradox was that neither Britain nor India could prevent such a development The primary and probably the only obligation of the British rulers in this country was to their own people and government. Inevitably, the interests of the Indian people suffered either neglect or outright suppression 'The Government of a people by itself', wrote J. S. Mill, 'has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm to be worked for the profit of its own inhabitants; but, if the good of the governed is the proper business of a government, it is utterly impossible that a people should directly attend to it'[10]

Apart from the fact that nothing is more paramount than self-interest, Britain's economic policy towards India was largely dictated by her rapid industrial expansion. The phenomenal growth of the British textile industry bears ample testimony to the significance of the new development. The process of spinning and weaving was revolutionised by the invention of the power-driven

[10]Connell A.K., *THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION OF INDIA*, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883, p. 5.

machinery. In the decade 1810-20, the textile enterprise in Britain provided employment for 250,000 workers. Sixty years later, the labour complement was approximately the same, but 'all had by then abandoned home looms for factory labour'. The changeover to the factory system facilitated a twelve-fold increase in the output per worker. By 1880, the same number of workers, that is, about 250,000, using power-operated machines, were manufacturing as much cloth as three million hands could have produced under the domestic system.[20] It was the feverish activity of Lancashire's 'iron slaves' and their unquenchable thirst for wider markets and more raw materials that encompassed the ruin of India's most venerable and splendid textile industry.

The art of spinning and weaving cotton yarn and cloth was known to India many millenniums before Christ. It flourished as far back as the Indus Valley Civilization and in later centuries developed into a major national enterprise, winning the admiration of the civilized world for the unique exquisiteness of its fabrics. The muslin, which became the most coveted commodity, was produced as if it had been conceived in a dream and executed like a jewel. The products of the Indian loom were greatly prized in many countries and till the eighteenth century found a large and ready market in Asia and Europe. This time-honoured trend in India's overseas trade was, however, reversed soon. As a subject country, she could not expect to compete with Britain on a fair basis and we have it on the authority of no less a person than H. H. Wilson that the British manufacturer 'employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms'.[21] The decline of the hand-spinning and hand-weaving industry became rapid as Lancashire began to flood the Indian market with its cotton machine goods

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[20] *THE EUROPEAN INHERITANCE*, edited by Barker Sir Ernest and others Vol. III, Clarendon Press, 1954, pp 89, 90

[21] Dutt Romesh, *THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA*, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1902, p. viii.

For instance, while India's exports of cotton piecegoods in 1816-17 were valued at Rs. 165 lakhs, they declined to a mere Rs. 8 lakhs by 1830-31. In fact, by the beginning of the twentieth century she became one of the biggest importers of cotton textiles and the mainstay of Lancashire's prosperity. Her takings in 1907-08 were 2,532 million yards of cloth and they rose to 3,159 million yards in 1913-14. 'The machine goods of Lancashire', says *The Oxford History of India*, 'together with the free trade policy had killed the Indian cotton industry'. The large community of weavers, who had pursued this profession from time immemorial, lost their occupation, fell into distress and then drifted to the overburdened land.

The impact of British dominion was felt by every other sector of the economy. The invasion of the countryside by cheap machine-produced goods dislodged and eventually annihilated the various home industries which, in their flourishing condition, had made an admirable contribution to the country's economic equillibrium The result was obvious. 'The workmen', says the author quoted earlier, 'thrown out of employment by foreign competition, merely become a useless burden on the soil, and a perpetually recurring tax on the community, except so far as they are carried off by famine and fever'.[22] Paradoxically, the impoverishment of the countryside increased with the expansion of the railways Though immensely beneficial for the country's political integration, they became a bane to the national economy. They transported manufactured goods imported from abroad to the four corners of the country and thus hastened the destruction of the domestic crafts and enterprises. They took away the raw materials for the factories of distant England and what was even more disastrous, transported large quantities of foodgrains which eventually became the only major item of export when millions of people in the country suffered from hunger and frequent famines. In the reign of Queen

[22]Connell A K., *THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION OF INDIA*, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883, p 52.

Victoria there were great famines in 1837, 1860, 1866, 1869, 1874 and 1877. The famine of 1877 was 'a calamity unprecedented in its intensity within the memory of living men'[23] and yet, in the true style of Nero, Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, held a Darbar, the splendour and the costliness of which were cruelly out of place in the distressed state of the country.

Poverty, like the princes, thus became an integral part of British rule in India and neither could be ended until her people became the arbiters of their own destiny. The rulers of free India are determined to banish want, disease and ignorance from the land in the same manner as they have swept away the princely states. The planners anticipate that consequent on the inauguration of the various development schemes through the successive five-year plans, there will be an appreciable rise in the *per capita* income in the country, the estimated increase being from Rs. 331 at the end of the second plan, 1960-61, to Rs. 546 at the end of the fifth plan, 1971-76. Considering the immense damage and stagnation the economy has suffered during the past few centuries, the rate of progress envisaged is by no means insignificant.

Canning laid down his office in 1862 and returned to England to die there soon after. As the preceding pages have borne out, his regime is memorable for many reasons, the most important one being that it marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. The turning-point was due, not so much to the transfer of the Government of India from the Company to the Crown which, from the Indian point of view, was largely a matter of nomenclature, as to the change that became apparent in the attitude of the British rulers towards the aspirations of the people. The old sense of caution and humility that had marked the actions and utterances of men like Warren Hastings, Munro and Metcalfe was replaced by a hardness derived from a feeling of superiority and arro-

[23]Dutt Romesh, *INDIA IN THE VICTORIAN AGE*: An Economic History of the People, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1904, p 427.

gance. The right of India to freedom was not openly repudiated, but a new tendency grew up whereby self-government was regarded as a matter 'for future ages if at all'. The internal weaknesses of Indians were diligently studied and given exaggerated importance in order to veto their right to self-rule. But such manoeuvres failed to recognise the irresistibility of the surging tide of nationalism. The post-mutiny history of India is indeed an unbroken record of the struggle of Indian nationalism, led by able and sober-minded men, for the realisation of the country's national destiny.

7. *LORD RIPON*

FROM Canning to Ripon is a big jump. During the eighteen years that stretched between the departure of the former and the arrival of the latter, India was governed by five Viceroys, none of whom deserve to be dismissed as belonging to the category of Shelley's 'illustrious obscure'. In fact, every one of them was distinguished in his own way, but a detailed reference to each of them is outside the scope of this book as it is essentially concerned with events rather than with personalities. Lord Elgin, who arrived in India in March 1862, was an able and intelligent man who had been a contemporary and friend of both Canning and Dalhousie at Oxford. He had won early recognition of his abilities by his appointment as Governor of Jamaica at the age of thirty-one. Both in that colony and in Canada, where he succeeded Metcalfe as Governor-General, he did much useful work and would probably have left a similar record in India too if he had been spared longer. Death overtook him suddenly at the hill-station of Dharmsala in November 1863. A notable event during his brief tenure was the expedition against the turbulent clan of Muslim fanatics, known as the Wahabis, who, operating from the fringes of the Hindu Kush, caused much disorder inside the country. In a vigorously conducted campaign the menace of these violent men was stamped out towards the end of the year.

The next Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, who arrived in Calcutta in January 1864, was fifty-two and was a familiar and popular figure in the country. At one stage of his Indian career, he had spent so much of his time with the people that he is said to have almost forgotten his own mother tongue. He showed his understanding and affection for India and her people by learning their language and by making a diligent study of their needs and aspirations. In October 1864, he addressed a solemn assembly

of six hundred princes and chiefs in their own language—a feat, we are told, which no other Governor-General 'before or after him could have performed'.[1] He displayed his customary vigour in wielding the pruning knife against wasteful governmental expenditure, but the results produced by his reforming zeal were rather disappointing. In fact, at the end of his five-year term of office, he left behind a sizeable deficit which could be made good by his successor only by means of increased imposts. Lawrence lamented that his efforts to increase the revenues of his Government were not supported by his non-official countrymen in India who, he pointed out, desired that 'all taxation should fall on the natives'. He also complained that enormous difficulties were encountered by him whenever anything was attempted to be done for the benefit of Indians. He wrote: 'I feel quite bewildered sometimes what to do'.[2] He entered a manly protest against the Imperial Government's action in imposing on India the financial burden of its military expedition against Abyssinia. Lawrence, says Dutt, asked for simple justice, but he asked in vain.

The Viceroy showed his solicitude for the peasants' welfare by giving security of tenure to the cultivators of Oudh and the Punjab in the same manner as Canning had done earlier in Bengal. He belonged to the school of Canning and others who sincerely believed that, by fixing the land assessment on a permanent basis, it would be possible to promote the well-being of the large community of cultivators with hereditary rights to their holdings. He urged that the benefits of such permanent settlement should be extended to all parts of the country so that the agricultural population might acquire the much-needed incentive to improve the fertility of the soil and to raise the volume of farm output. Lawrence had the misfortune of witnessing two famines during his regime. The one that visited Orissa

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[1]Dutt Romesh, *INDIA IN THE VICTORIAN AGE*, Kegan Paul, 1904, p 246.

[2]Smith Bosworth, *LIFE OF LORD LAWRENCE*, Vol. II, Smith Elder, pp. 411, 412.

in 1866 took a toll of nearly one million lives. The second that overtook Rajasthan and Bundelkhand in 1868-69 was less disastrous and was, we are told, 'notable for the enunciation of the principle that prevention of starvation must be the supreme guide to official action.'[3] But, as subsequent outbreaks proved, famines and mass starvation could not be averted merely by official action unless there was a complete orientation in the Government's economic policy. Lawrence gave a great impetus to the various development schemes, inaugurated by Dalhousie but condemned to stagnation due to the outbreak of the Mutiny. The railway lines and the irrigation projects were greatly expanded, but at a ruinous cost. The Viceroy introduced a new system of financing the public works by means of loans, instead of meeting the expenditure from current revenues, thus unwittingly giving encouragement to extravagant expenditure. His only annexation was effected after a short war with Bhutan, a forest-clad country on the slopes of the Himalayas. By a treaty, concluded in November 1865, the Bhutanese surrendered, in return for an annual subsidy, eighteen Duars and a strip of territory that was eventually developed into a number of flourishing tea-estates.

No detailed discussion of the Afghan episode is relevant to the purpose of this book. Lawrence's policy towards Afghanistan, initially stigmatised as one of 'masterly inactivity', eventually turned out to be both correct and statesmanlike. He repudiated the theory put forward by the advocates of the 'forward policy' that the security of the British Indian possessions against the so-called Russian menace lay in reducing Afghanistan to the status of a British vassal. He urged that the Russian threat should be countered, not at Kabul, but at St. Petersburg by means of negotiations initiated from London. The Afghans were fanatically devoted to the preservation of their national integrity and the violators of their territory would not be left in peace till they were expelled from Afghan soil. Indeed, it would be 'impolitic and unwise' to decrease

[3]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 686.

Russia's difficulties by weakening Afghanistan's power of resistance to foreign invasions. Moreover, the veteran Dost Muhammad had laid the British under a deep debt of gratitude by refraining from adding to their distractions during the uprising of 1857. In conversation with Lawrence, the Amir had pleaded that after him the issue of succession to the throne should be allowed to be fought out by his sons without outside interference. India's security, Lawrence declared, consisted in the efficiency of her own armed forces and 'in the contentment, if not in the attachment of the masses.' He also drew attention to the financial implications of an Afghan adventure and asserted that India was in no position to meet an expenditure to which no limits could be foreseen. His just policy was heartily supported by the influential members of his Council and by the home authorities and was scrupulously observed by his two successors. After the death of Dost Muhammad in 1863 at the age of eighty, his numerous sons launched a war of succession. In 1868 Sher Ali emerged victorious and received recognition from Lawrence's Government as the new ruler of Afghanistan. Sher Ali remained a steadfast ally of the British till Lytton's aggression drove him out of his dominions and involved the unfortunate Afghanistan in another bloody conflict. 'Rarely,' says the *Oxford History of India*, 'has a statesman been so completely and quickly vindicated by time as Lawrence was in Afghanistan.'

Lord Mayo, who succeeded Lawrence in January 1869, was Chief Secretary for Ireland in Disraeli's ministry before the Indian office was conferred on him. He wiped out the budget deficits of the Government of India and secured a surplus by increasing the salt duty and the income tax. He enforced economies in expenditure and, as part of the drive in that direction, substituted fixed block grants over a period of five years to the provincial Governments for annual payments earmarked for specified purposes. Local Governments were encouraged to raise their own resources to meet their requirements and the incidence of the new burden fell mostly on land. Mayo increased

the powers of the town committees and conducted the country's first census operations. He founded the first college at Ajmer for the sons of princes and nobles. He met Sher Ali at Ambala in March 1869 and by a superb display of courtesy, tact and decorum, increased the Amir's attachment to the British, while conceding almost nothing to him. Mayo's promising career was cut short by his assassination by a Pathan fanatic at the conclusion of his visit to the Andamans in February 1872.

Lord Northbrook, who became Viceroy after Mayo's murder, belonged to a banking family and was endowed with the quality of caution, realism and shrewdness, so widespread among the members of his class. He believed that India's most urgent need was the reduction of the tax burdens and a check on the growing legislation. He was indeed a supreme exponent of the *status quo*. A firm believer in free trade, he reduced the import duties from 7½ per cent. to 5 per cent. He, however, firmly brushed aside the pressure that was brought to bear upon him by Lancashire through the Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, to make further reductions, arguing that the levy was not a protective but a revenue measure He also came into conflict with the home authorities on the Afghan question by upholding Lawrence's policy of non-intervention. By timely and effective action, he averted the outbreak of famine in Bihar and Bengal in 1873-74.

Northbrook grasped the Baroda nettle boldly but inexpertly. Malhar Rao Gaekwar's misrule was notorious and needed no enquiry or investigation to prove it. In 1875, he was called upon to face a commission on the charge of attempting to poison the British Resident, Colonel Phayre. The findings of the commission were divided, the Indian members returning the verdict of "not guilty", while their British counterparts arrived at the opposite conclusion. The Viceroy thus found himself in an invidious position, from which he escaped rather clumsily by dropping this particular charge. The Maharaja was deposed on grounds of misrule—a simple and straightforward charge fully

adequate to bring the Gaekwar to book. Northbrook, who could not see eye to eye with Salisbury on many vital issues, resigned and returned to his country.

Lytton, who succeeded him in 1876, was cast in a different mould. He was brilliant, volatile, rash and theatrical. Son of a novelist, his own literary abilities were impressive, but as the head of the Indian Government he proved himself a complete and costly failure. He had been selected and sent out to India to fulfil the ambitious but disastrous plans of Disraeli and Salisbury in Afghanistan and accordingly lost no time in stirring up trouble in that country. His peremptory demand on Sher Ali to accept a British envoy in his capital was politely rejected by the Amir on the valid ground that his people were apt to interpret such a move as a serious derogation from the sovereignty of their ruler. Lytton, who intended to reduce Afghanistan to the position of an Indian feudatory state, was determined to have his own way and when his envoy, Sir Neville Chamberlain, was halted at Ali Masjid, war became inevitable. There was a remorseless repetition of the history of 1839. At first the British army won brilliant military victories and the Afghan 'earthen pipkin' was seemingly shattered. Sher Ali fled the country, leaving his eldest son, Yakub Khan, to deal with the invaders as best he could. The new ruler concluded the humiliating treaty of Gandamak in May 1879, which virtually reduced Afghanistan into a British protectorate. It was a shining hour for the advocates of the forward-policy and expression was given to their exultation by Disraeli who wrote to Lytton: 'It will always be a source of satisfaction that I had the opportunity of placing you on the throne of the Great Moghul.' But such rejoicings were premature and misplaced. The Afghans were roused to savage fury at the violation of their national sovereignty and on September 3, 1879 Sir Louis Cavagnari, the new British envoy, and his escort were massacred. The usual reprisals followed, exposing a peaceful country to complete anarchy. The unfortunate Yakub was sent to India as a State prisoner and he died at Dehra Dun in 1923.

Abdur Rahman, son of Sher Ali's brother, was found willing to take over the chaotic heritage of his uncle and by a supreme exercise of soldierly and statesmanlike abilities, he was able to restore order in the country. Lytton's Afghan policy was now in complete ruins and it became his urgent concern to facilitate an early evacuation of his countrymen from the hostile country. The result of the Afghan war was the substitution of Abdur Rahman for Sher Ali, the expenditure of India's scarce resources valued at over twenty million sterling, untold suffering, bereavements and lamentations.

Lytton's regime also became noteworthy for the terrible famine of 1876-78 which carried off more than five million lives in British India alone. With a cynical and almost inhuman disregard for the suffering of his fellow-men, the Viceroy held a showy Darbar at Delhi in January 1877 to proclaim Queen Victoria the Empress of India, the desirability and the value of the new title being called into question by no less a person than Gladstone. Lytton sought to rally round the Raj, the conservative and reactionary elements in the country by suggesting the creation of an Indian peerage and privy council. In December 1879, his Government announced that appointments would be given to 'young men of good family and social position possessed of fair abilities and education,' the nominees being called 'statutory civil servants' Sixty-nine were nominated in after years, but generally speaking, they 'did not possess sufficient educational qualifications and were often found unequal to their responsibilities.'[4] Lytton's real intention in seeking to create such a cadre was 'to exclude educated Indians in favour of rich young men of social eminence'[5] whose docility and absolute subordination could be depended upon. He presumably failed to realise that the 'statutory civilians' became the objects of ridicule and contempt. He effectively muzzled the Indian language

[4]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p 361.

[5]Gopal S., *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 167.

press making even fair comment and criticism extremely hazardous.

Lastly, by playing the role of an enthusiastic agent for Lancashire, Lytton abolished even the low import duty of 5 per cent. on coarse cotton piecegoods, thus delivering one more blow at the Indian cotton industry. His predecessor, besides scaling down the duty by 2½ per cent., had gifted away as much as £88,000 by lowering the basis of valuation. Both these measures were unjust and detrimental to the interests of the Government and the indigenous enterprise. Northbrook was, however, not prepared to go further, but his successor had no such qualms or constraints. The British Parliament, the British Cabinet and the Secretary of State were all determined to placate Lancashire and even if the Viceroy had been disposed to defend India's rights, he was really helpless. No less a body than the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce felt constrained to register its protest against such gross injustice. It pointed out to the Viceroy that the measure lent itself to the interpretation that 'the various sections of the people of England have more influence in determining the character of the financial disposition in India than the interests and express wishes of the people under the Government of your Excellency.' Thus, from the very commencement of its career, the fortunes of the Indian cotton mill industry were dominated by extraneous influences, despite the fact that for a considerable period Lancashire had been enjoying unrivalled supremacy in the world market for textiles. At one time, England's exports totalled 7,000 million yards a year,—some 2,000 million yards more than the total volume of cloth that enters the international trade to-day. The Indian textile industry's emancipation from such a politically and commercially powerful competitor came only with the intensification of the *swadeshi* movement as part of the political campaign for national freedom and when the statutory protection granted to the industry in 1930 assumed really effective proportions. The Second World War completely changed the position, transforming India into a major exporter of cotton textiles which consti-

tute the third important earner of foreign exchange for the country. To-day Lancashire's main pre-occupation is to secure the regulation of textile imports into the United Kingdom from other countries.

Lytton's regime in India ended when Gladstone was returned to power in 1880. Lord Hartington, Secretary of State for India in the new Ministry, described Lytton as the incarnation and embodiment of an Indian policy which was everything which an Indian policy ought not to be. 'I cannot tell you,' declared Gladstone in 1880, 'how dishonouring to England I consider to have been the Government of India during the last three years' It was, therefore, considered necessary to send out to India a Viceroy, who would not only undo the mischief of his predecessor, but also uphold and introduce the principles of Liberalism in the government of the country. Lord Ripon was the obvious person who was both willing and, it was felt at the time, competent to give effect to the Prime Minister's intentions. Apart from the fact that, as Under-Secretary of State for India in 1861 and Secretary in 1866, Ripon had gained an intimate knowledge of the affairs of this country, he shared his political chief's enthusiasm for right causes and noble ideals. His views on social problems were startingly unorthodox and he stated it as his belief that much good would result if a few landlords and money-lords could be hanged annually! He showed both courage and sincerity when he sought spiritual solace in Roman Catholicism, although his change of faith was stigmatized by his friends and contemporaries as apostasy and involved a possible loss of political career. Such a man, who, in addition, enjoyed the complete confidence of the Prime Minister and who was greatly esteemed in his party, could have accomplished much in India. That indeed was Ripon's intention, but, as we shall see presently, it was thoroughly defeated.

Ripon took charge of the Indian administration in June 1880. The climate in the country for reform and progress was most uncongenial. With rare and honourable exceptions, both the civilians and the commercial Europeans had

given their enthusiastic support to Lytton's policy of aggression abroad and reaction at home. In the prevailing situation of unbridled British ascendancy, any Viceroy, who presumed to proclaim that Indians too had rights in their own country, ran the grave risk of being arraigned with the charge of seeking to preside over the liquidation of the British empire in India. Ripon had not come to India to surrender the country to Indians, nor did he intend to promise them self-government; he merely desired to increase their *influence* in the administration of their country. And yet his innocuous and unimportant measures designed to serve this end, were opposed with such fury and determination that the opposition not only astonished his fair-minded contemporaries, but gave them a good opportunity to assess the future prospects for constitutional progress in India. Ripon could, however, have his own way during the first few years of his term in carrying through some of his less significant reforms.

The new Viceroy's first beneficent legislation was the Factory Act of 1881. The aim of the measure was modest. A factory, under the provisions of the Act, was a workplace where mechanised instruments of production were used and which employed not less than one hundred workers. Besides, to come within the scope of this definition, the factory should be in production for not less than four months in the year. Tea, coffee and indigo plantations were placed outside the purview of the legislation. Children below seven years of age were debarred from employment, while those below twelve were not to be worked for more than nine hours a day. They should not be given dangerous jobs nor should they be asked to serve in two factories on the same day. Each working day should consist of one rest hour and four holidays should be granted in one month. Dangerous machinery should be properly fenced. The Act provided for the inspection of factories by Government officials to enforce its provisions, infringement of which was punishable with fines upto Rs. 200.

The Factory Act of 1881 was thus not a revolutionary piece of legislation. What it omitted to do for labour was enormous and yet the Viceroy had to 'secure his flanks and rear' and to overcome stiff opposition before he could put the Act on the statute book. Much progress has been made in India since then in the direction of labour legislation. This is particularly noticeable in the cotton mill industry, the country's foremost organised enterprise, where technical developments and ameliorative measures have made simultaneous progress. Since independence big steps have been taken to improve the lot of the factory worker by telescoping within a few years reforms which far more industrially advanced countries have taken many generations to introduce. Apart from a substantial increase in wages, the provision of such social security measures as provident fund, employees' state insurance, gratuity and bonus and of amenities like leave with wages and paid festival holidays, have greatly improved the condition of the industrial worker whose average earnings are now at a much higher level than the *per capita* national income. The campaign for the modernisation of the productive equipment and for higher work effort is likely to take the country nearer the two-fold goal of increased national wealth and higher wages. Tribute must be paid to Ripon for paving the way for such progress by his pioneering legislation of 1881.

Among the many obnoxious "achievements" of Lytton was, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, the enactment of the notorious Vernacular Press Act of 1878. The Act, besides being opposed to all canons of fair play and justice, flagrantly violated some of the earliest injunctions against putting fetters on the free circulation of news and knowledge. 'A tenure,' a document of 1835 had declared, 'dependent on attempts to suppress the communication of public opinion could not be lasting: both because such a tenure must be rotten, and because such attempts must fail' Gladstone was roused to great indignation at the arbitrary character of Lytton's measure which he condemned as a contradiction of the spirit of the age and a

disgrace to British authority. Apart from the fact that such stringent regulations against the Indian language papers were not necessary, they were discriminatory. They did not apply to the English-written press and the fact that some of the papers edited in that language were owned by Indians did not in any way invalidate the charge of discrimination. When in 1882, Ripon repealed the Act, he received the well-earned gratitude of the editors of Indian language journals, fifty-eight of whom, hailing from all parts of the country, conveyed their grateful thanks to him.

The Viceroy was less successful in securing the removal of the objectionable features in the Arms Act of 1878 — again Lytton's handiwork. The Act was in every sense an affront to the dignity of the Indian people. They could not bear arms in their own country, but foreigners, including Anglo-Indians, could. However offensive to their self- respect, that was the inevitable price they had to pay for their subjection. The distinction between an Indian and a European was, however, not introduced by Lytton but had existed in the earlier arms legislations. It was not Ripon's intention, nor was it in his power to abrogate the Arms Act. 'On the main issue,' says his latest biographer, 'his mind was made up. Repeal was impossible, the question was whether Lytton's Act was too stringent and required amendment.'[6] Ripon, therefore, merely aimed at securing the liberalisation of the existing statute so as to make it less offensive to Indians and to ensure that persons in real need of arms for protection were not denied the means of owning them. His proposals and a draft Bill embodying them were forwarded to the Secretary of State in May 1882, but nothing was heard about them. Thus ended his well-meant efforts on behalf of Indians.

Ripon has been wrongly described as the father of the local self-governing institutions in India. There were such bodies in British India long before his arrival in this

[6]Gopal S., *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 78.

country. He merely intended to enlarge their scope by giving a wider application to the elective principle, by granting them greater autonomy and by lessening official influence and domination in the conduct of their affairs. Even the proposed reforms were not entirely new. For years past, Indians had been members of the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils and had been taking part in the administration of municipal and local boards. But these institutions lacked life, vigour and purpose and could certainly not be looked upon as a training-ground for self-government. There was a general opposition to the elective system which it was feared would foster a spirit of opposition and of impatience at the official tutelage. In fact, they were merely treated like decentralised departments of Government and not as the agencies of self-government. It is true that there were a number of municipalities in which the non-officials preponderated; it is also true that many of them were given extensive powers, but in actual fact real authority was exercised by the officials, thus rendering its devolution to these bodies a mere illusion.

Ripon was anxious to see that this state of affairs was substantially modified. He know that any radical proposals from him would have slender chances of acceptance. His suggestion that municipalities in which the elective system existed, should be allowed to send up members to the Legislative Councils had not found favour. So the Government of India's Resolution of May 18, 1882, which bears the imprint of all these limiting factors, cannot, at least in retrospect, be acclaimed as an epoch-making document, as it was described at the time. The scheme advocated by Ripon was that a *taluka* or *tehsil* should ordinarily form the maximum area to be placed under a Local Board. Both the municipalities and the Local Boards should have 'a large preponderance of non-official members.' Members of Boards should, as far as possible, be chosen by election. Similarly, 'whenever practicable', non-official persons should be allowed to function as Chairmen of the Local Boards. The Government should

ensure by means of supervision and control that the affairs of these bodies were conducted well and efficiently, but such powers should be exercised from outside and not by the officials taking part in their proceedings. Ripon and his Council were convinced that the new system, which was intended to serve as 'an instrument of political and popular education,' would succeed if given a fair trial. Their optimism was based on the knowledge that 'in the few cases where real responsibility has been thrown upon local bodies, and real power entrusted to them, the results have been very gratifying.' The Resolution made it clear that the object of the measure was not an 'improvement in administration,' although that end would also be gained in course of time as more knowledge and experience were acquired in governing the local bodies.

One fails to see how these cautious and conservative proposals would have disrupted the British Raj in India. In words appropriate to his name, W. S. Blunt has described the whole issue thus: 'Put in a few words, the Local Self Government Bill means that the native communities are to be allowed to mend their own roads, to levy their own water-rates, and devise their own sanitation, on the condition and provided that the Commissioner of the district does not think them incapable of doing so. This for the first time after a hundred years of English rule!'[7] Could it be that the Indians never knew the art of administering their own affairs before the coming of the British —even the art of mending their roads and drains? Ripon himself was not prepared to go far enough. His scheme was intended to make the educated Indians friends instead of enemies in order to secure the continuance of British rule in this country.[8] 'We shall not', he declared, 'subvert the British Empire by allowing the Bengali *Baboo* to discuss his own schools and drains. Rather shall we afford

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[7]Blunt W. S, *INDIA UNDER RIPON*, T. F. Unwin, 1909, p. 271.

[8]Gopal S, *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 84.

him a safety valve if we can turn his attention to these innocuous subjects.'[9]

And yet this harmless scheme was opposed by the India Council, its fatal weakness, in the experienced but tired eyes of the Council's members being the importance that was accorded to the non-official element and to the elective system in the administration of the local bodies. Rightly did Ripon ask Hartington in September 1882: 'What is the use of a Liberal Government, so far as India is concerned, if it is to give itself up bound hand and foot to the guidance of a set of old gentlemen, whose energies are relaxed by age, and who, having excellent salaries, and no responsibility, amuse themselves by criticising the proposals and obstructing the plans of those who have the most recent knowledge of the real state of India, and who have on their shoulders the whole responsibility for the good government of that country.'[10] The Indian National Congress was, therefore, not wrong in making the abolition of the India Council a major plank in its agitation soon after its establishment in 1885. *The Times*' forebodings that Ripon's measure would invite a struggle for power, with disastrous consequences, proved imaginary, because the type of local self-government introduced by the Viceroy was so tame that it was inherently incapable of provoking any far-reaching changes, either for good or ill. This is best illustrated by the fact that the contribution of the local bodies to India's constitutional history was at all times virtually nothing.

It fell to Ripon to salvage the Anglo-Afghan relations from his predecessor's ruinous policy of aggression and war. He greatly succeeded in re-establishing those relations on a basis of good neighbourliness, which was the distinguishing feature of Lawrence's foreign policy, and was in a position to write to his successor, Lord Dufferin, in November 1884, that India's relations with Amir Abdur

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[9]Gopal S, *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON,* Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 95.

[10]Wolf Lucien, *LIFE OF THE FIRST MARQUESS OF RIPON,* Vol II, John Murray 1921, p. 53.

Rahman, Lytton's "ram in the thicket," were never better. He showed considerable restraint in his dealings with Upper Burma and thus averted a war with that country—a wise course of action which his successor failed to follow. Ripon and his Finance Minister, Sir Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer, made a clean sweep of all the remaining import duties—except those on salt and liquors—and thus devoutly made their votive offerings to the goddess of free trade, giving scant consideration to the impact of their action on India's industrial enterprises. By retaining the customs duties, the Government could well have reduced the burden on the over-taxed land, but this was not done. Ripon's proposals, contained in his Despatch of October 1882, for giving the cultivator permanence and security of tenure in his holdings, while at the same time retaining for the State the power to enhance the land revenue on 'defined conditions,' were not accepted by the Secretary of State who, after considerable delay, formulated his own proposals which merely perpetuated the *status quo*. The Hunter Commission on education, appointed by Ripon, reported in 1883, making far-reaching proposals for placing public instruction on a broader and more popular basis and urging that primary education should be given greater attention by earmarking generous funds from the provincial revenues.

The rendition of Mysore in 1881 is a notable event in the Viceroyalty of Ripon, not so much because it marked the end of the fifty years' sequestration of the Wodiyar family, as on account of the terms and conditions that accompanied the restoration. Historians of British rule in India are entitled to claim that the restoration of the state to its ruling family was 'an outstanding example of the manner in which the Crown's disavowal of any annexationist policy has been observed,'[11] but, from the people's point of view, its importance lies in another direction. After Bentinck's deposition of the Maharaja for misrule, the State had enjoyed the advantages of good and efficient

[11]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, p. 502.

government for an uninterrupted period of half a century. Since caprice is the basis of unchecked personal rule, there would have been no certainty that the high standard of administration would be maintained by the new rulers of Mysore unless they were specifically bound to do so. The rendition treaty was most explicit on this point. It demanded that the Maharaja should on no account deviate from the traditions of good government established by the British administrators. In the event of a breach or non-observance of this stipulation, Article 23 of the treaty warned, the paramount power 'may resume possession of the said territories and assume the direct administration thereof.' It is not suggested that Mysore's subsequent progress was entirely due to the terms of the treaty; fortunately, the Maharajas proved to be wise men and showed great insight in the choice of their Dewans Nevertheless, the treaty of 1881 may well claim the dignity of a constitution for Mysore, imposing an inescapable obligation on the rulers to govern well and indirectly guaranteeing to its people protection from misrule At one time or another, a number of states came temporarily under British jurisdiction The course of the history of the Indian states would perhaps have been different if they too had been bound on the lines of the Mysore regulation. But the question of good government in princely India was never raised to the level of national importance, although the well-being and happiness of more than ninety million people were involved.

Of all the strange things that Ripon witnessed in India, the agitation over what is known as the Ilbert Bill undoubtedly caused him the greatest astonishment and distress The issue involved was a trivial one, but it served as a convenient pretext for giving expression to the pent up fury of the small colony of Europeans in the country who were determined not to allow Indians to take a single step forward in any direction. According to the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1873, no Indian magistrate or Sessions Judge could try a European British subject, but this prohibition did not apply in the Presid-

ency towns. Apart from the racial aspect of the question, it was absurd that an Indian district magistrate or sessions Judge should have less powers than his European subordinate or his Indian colleague in a presidency town. In 1882, when the Code was being revised, Behari Lal Gupta, an Indian officer who had joined the Government after passing with three other Indians, the Indian Civil Service examination in 1871, raised the issue urging that the discrimination against his countrymen should be removed. He himself had exercised magisterial powers over British offenders when acting as Presidency Magistrate, but had lost them when transferred to a more responsible position in the mofussil![12] A Bill to remove this anomaly was accordingly introduced in the Legislative Council in February 1883.

By countenancing such a legislation, Ripon wanted to perform a simple act of justice to Indians and yet his countrymen in India refused to view it in that light. He had by now become *persona non grata* with all sections of his community — the Civil Service, the Bench, the Bar, the traders and the planters[13] He had deeply offended the civil servants by sponsoring local self-governing institutions without the domination of officials who had long been accustomed to treat the districts in their charge as their private domains. Such a monopolistic tendency was noticed by several Viceroys, including Northbrook, who complained that they did not allow India to progress. The Bench and the Bar were equally angry with Ripon on account of the elevation of Romesh Chandra Mitter to the post of officiating Chief Justice at the Calcutta High Court in 1882. The commercial Europeans were no less furious at the liberal leanings of his Government which, they feared, might end in subverting their hold on the country's commercial and economic life. The immediate provocation for the white community's revolt was, of course, on racial grounds.

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[12]Gopal S, *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON,* Oxford University Press, 1953, p 128.

[13]Ibid, p. 121.

It is the experience of subject nations all over the world to be treated with contempt and derision by their conquerors, no matter how great their culture and how ancient their civilization. Whether conquered or not, the Indians had come under the sway of the British whose estrangement from the people of the land increased with the growth of their power. Great men like Warren Hastings, who regarded racial arrogance as a crime against humanity had little power to influence the course of history. By Wellesley's time it had become customary to call certain parts of Calcutta a "Black Town" and to describe its dwellers as 'dusky swarms.' With the passage of years, religion became increasingly intolerant and dogmatic and racial pride more exclusive. 'A certainty,' write Edward Thompson and Garratt, 'of immeasurable superiority settled on British minds. It was felt that Indians had no particular rights beyond that of accepting the government provided for them, without demur as to the cost or kind.'[14] A steadily worsening situation was further aggravated by the hatreds and antagonisms generated by the Sepoy Mutiny. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, than whom there was no greater friend of the British, felt constrained to say that the Government was frittering away the good-will of the people by its 'contempt' for them. The opinion of many of the officials, Sir Syed complained, was that 'no native can be a gentleman'.[15] Instances of the indignities suffered by Indians were numerous, but only two of them may be mentioned here to show that neither status nor standing could purchase immunity from insults. Sir Henry Cotton writes: "When Mr. Justice Mahmood and Sir Charles Turner, visited the Madras Club, a member promptly came up and told the Chief Justice that 'no native was allowed in the club'. The two gentlemen had to return." He records an even more serious incident thus: "In a recent *Times* review of the *Leaves from the Diaries of a Soldier and Sportsman*, by Sir Montagu Gerard, I read as follows:

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[14]Thompson Edward and Garratt G. T., *RISE AND FULFILMENT OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA*, Macmillan, 1935, p 299

[15]Mehta Asoka and Patwardhan Achyut, *THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE IN INDIA*, Kitabistan, 1942, pp. 22, 23.

......'A petty Rajah, going on a state visit to Agra, takes his seat in a first-class compartment, with a magnificent send-off by his loyal subjects. On his return he sneaks out of the third-class and explains to the expectant crowds that on the former occasion he had been boxed up with a couple of sahibs, muddy from snipe-shooting, who had made him shampoo them all the way.' This story of the Indian Rajah, who was called upon to unlace the boots and shampoo the weary legs of a British officer, is corroborated by Sir David Barr, the Resident at Hyderabad, and would be incredible if it were not vouchsafed for by such high authority."[16]

Nothing need be incredible when it concerns a subject people, for, as Bryce points out, it needs 'something more than the virtue of a philosopher' and the 'tenderness of a saint' to treat them as human beings. And since General Dyer was neither a philosopher nor a saint, on April 13, 1919 he hunted down an unarmed assembly of twenty thousand peaceful citizens at Amritsar, killing hundreds of them as if they were rats and vermin, and won rewards and the plaudits of the more exuberant sections of his countrymen befitting the achievements of a hero. These unpleasant episodes are recalled here in order to emphasize the fact that relations cease to be normal and human when one country acquires dominion over another. Nehru has rightly said that imperialism and racialism formed the twin adjuncts of British rule in India.[17]

It is small wonder, therefore, that the campaign against the Ilbert Bill was fierce and formidable. Fantastic falsehoods were given the widest circulation. Powers, it was said, were proposed to be given to the Indian Judges so that they might fill their harems with white women![18] Many canards of equal and worse absurdity were sedulously encouraged in order to make out a case that Indians were

[16]Cotton Sir Henry John Stedman, *NEW INDIA OR INDIA IN TRANSITION*, K Paul, Trench, 1905, pp 60, 61.

[17]Nehru Jawaharlal, *THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA*, The Signet Press, 1946, p. 386

[18]Gopal S., *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 138.

totally unworthy of trust and responsibility. Suggestions were put forward that the doors of the Indian Civil Service should be closed against the nationals of this country, while those that had already got into it should be sent out by paying compensation.[19] It was stated as a solemn fact that Indians could never be treated as the equals of Englishmen and to show how low the former were in their eyes, the following advertisement was published in the *Englishman* of March 29, 1883: 'Wanted Sweepers, Punkah Coolies and Bhisties for the residents of Saidpur. None but educated Bengalee Baboos who have passed the Entrance Examination need apply. Ex-Deputy Magistrates (Bengali) preferred.'[20] A European and Anglo-Indian Defence Association was formed 'to resist the constantly progressive attacks on the rights and interests of the European community in India.' The Viceroy was exposed to personal insults in the streets of Calcutta and plans were considered to storm the Government House and to capture him with a view to shipping him off to England. Racial frenzy could go no further.

Fair-minded Englishmen — and they were steadfastly with India throughout her struggle for freedom — deeply deplored the insensate hatred of their countrymen against Indians 'To many people,' wrote Bishop Whitehead, 'besides myself the risk of injustice to Europeans involved in the (Ilbert) Bill seemed grossly exaggerated during the agitation against it......Bitter things were said about the educated Indians, especially about the Bengalis, which could not fail deeply to hurt their sensitive feelings and arouse their resentment Reckless of consequences and blind to the extreme delicacy of the British position in India, some of the Europeans indulged in a perfect orgy of abuse and seemed to revel in the opportunity of wounding the self-respect of the educated Indians.'[21] Without

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19 Gopal S, *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 117.

20 Ibid, p 146

21 Whitehead Henry Right Rev. *INDIAN PROBLEMS*, Constable, 1924, p. 206.

support from any influential quarter, except from distant England, Ripon did not have the courage or strength to face the storm, to which he bowed, though reluctantly. A revised bill, completely destroying the original object of the measure, was enacted in January 1884, by which a European offender brought before a district magistrate or Sessions Judge, Indian or European, could claim to be tried by a Jury, half of whom were to be Europeans or Americans. As Indians could not claim any such privilege, the racial discrimination against them persisted.

Ripon's Viceroyalty is indeed memorable, not for any outstanding achievement, but for its magnificent failure. He was a kind-hearted and a progressive patrician, who desired to see the world a better place to live in but lacked the determination and courage of men like Warren Hastings and William Bentinck, with whose great names his own is associated. It would, however, be wrong to over-emphasise his weakness and vacillation, for the things he attempted were of a type which no administrator, however determined, could have put through. The question of granting rights to Indians was of extraordinary importance and no Viceroy, however towering his personality, could presume to settle it in their favour. Ripon, as we have seen, did not set out to put India on the road to freedom, nor was it his intention to do so. That he was not very different from most of his predecessors in the matter of real progress is borne out by his opposition in later years to the admission of Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council, mainly as Lord Morley records, 'on the secrecy argument,' that is, they 'would have to know military and foreign secrets.'[22] In fact, Ripon was convinced that the ultimate sanction for British rule in India was the army and held 'as strongly as any man that we must be careful to maintain our military strength,' but, unlike most of his countrymen, he wished to create conditions in India aimed at reducing the foreign character of the administration and

[22]Morley John Viscount, *RECOLLECTIONS,* Vol II, Macmillan, 1917, p. 211.

thus win the consent of the educated classes to it. Even in this modest attempt he failed.

His failure was, however, a blessing in disguise, for it proved a turning-point in the political history of India His reforms were foiled despite the fact that Gladstone, the most ardent champion of liberalism and of the underdog, was at the helm of the Imperial Government. It is true that the attitude of the European community in India, official and non-official, and of the India Council towards Indian aspirations was unhelpful and hostile, but would it have mattered if Whitehall, the fountainhead of all authority, had a well-defined policy on the issue of this country's constitutional progress Indeed, on this vital question, there was a complete identity of views among all the principal political parties in England Bishop Whitehead writes that from 1883, there was a distinct hardening of the ruling race theory and that 'aspirations for self-government were stigmatised as disloyal' In consequence, even men like Gokhale, the Bishop adds, 'came to regard the British bureaucracy as a determined opponent of all the cherished ambitions of educated Indians. This was a disaster'[23] There was good reason for such disillusionment, for responsible persons like W. S. Seton-Kerr, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, declared that the Ilbert Bill had outraged 'the cherished conviction' of every Englishman in India, from the lowest to the highest, that 'he belongs to a race whom God has destined to govern and subdue.'[24]

Such categorical statements left no room for doubt about the attitude of the British rulers towards the Indian demand. It was the system that was to blame and no progress could be possible unless it was made responsive to the country's aspirations The flow of new ideas from the West, accelerated by the growth of the modern means of transport and communication, including the opening of the

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[23]Whitehead Henry Right Rev *INDIAN PROBLEMS*, Constable, 1924, p 211.

[24]Ibid, p. 207.

Suez Canal in 1869, had speeded up the political awakening in the country. Though forestalled by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and his brilliant associates by a generation, men like Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Banerjea became the new political evangelists, whose preachings of nationalism were heard by an increasing number of people. It, therefore, became necessary to create a central organisation and give it an institutional basis, charged with the responsibility of giving direction and strength to the nascent movement. The British Indian Association and the Indian Association of Bengal, the East India Association of Bombay, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha of Maharashtra and the Mahajana Sabha of South India were older bodies with much good work to their credit, but they could not be a substitute for a central organisation with jurisdiction comprehending the entire country. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was, therefore, a historic event and was rightly described as heralding the birth of a nation. Great-hearted Englishmen like A. O. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn played no small part in setting up a common political platform in the country and in vitalizing the activities of the Congress.

Inevitably, for many years, the Congress professed undeviating devotion and loyalty to the British Raj. It was grateful to the new regime for conferring on the country the inestimable boon of the rule of law which had made life secure and progress possible. Even in the palmy days of the indigenous governments conditions so satisfactory in the present and so full of promise for the future had never existed. It is true that the utterances and actions of the British rulers did not reciprocate such manifestations of loyalty, but leaders of Indian opinion were convinced that by the very eloquence and the earnestness of their plea they would eventually succeed in disarming official opposition to their political aspirations. This explains why even the modest Resolution of Ripon's Government on local self-government was applauded by Ranade as a 'liberal and life-inspiring' state paper 'instinct with true

statesmanship.' At the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1886, W. C. Bonnerjee asked his audience whether such an assembly of all classes and communities, speaking one language, was possible 'in the most glorious days' of Indian rule and replied: 'Such a thing is possible under British rule, and under British rule only.' From his Presidential chair in December 1897, Sir Sankaran Nair told the Congress: 'It is impossible to argue a man into slavery in the English language.' The progress of the Congress from 1885 to 1905, says its historian, was based on 'a firm faith in constitutional agitation' and on an equally strong belief in the sense of British justice.[25]

But the inner core of the British system remained as hard and unyielding as before. Lord Curzon, with whom the next chapter will deal, held that 'it will be well for England, better for India, and best of all for the cause of progressive civilization in general, if it be clearly understood from the outset that....we have not the smallest intention of abandoning our Indian possessions, and that it is highly improbable that any such intention will be entertained by our posterity.'[26] A similar opinion, though slightly varying in its phraseology, was expressed by Lord Cromer who declared that the foundation-stone of Indian reform must be the steadfast maintenance of British supremacy. One cannot but admire the absolute certitude with which these men propounded their political views, as if they were masters of eternity!

Expressions such as these, which formed the very texture and tapestry of British policy towards India, compelled the nationalist movement to adopt new attitudes and to devise new techniques for the attainment of its goal The advent of Mahatma Gandhi to Indian politics in later decades and his rise to unique leadership were thus not mere accidents of history, but the inevitable consequence of the growing rigidity of British response to the

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[25]Sitaramayya, Dr Pattabhi B, *THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS,* Vol. I, Indian National Congress, Masulipatam, p 61.

[26]Fraser Lovat, *INDIA UNDER CURZON AND AFTER,* Heinemann, 1911, p. 34.

Indian demand. A good deal has been written in disparagement of the Mahatma's methods, but no other practical plan was ever put forward that could ensure the fulfilment of the country's destiny. Direct action in fact grew out of the manifest limitations of the constitutional agitation. By capturing the hearts and the imagination of the people, as none others had done before him, and by demonstrating the essential superiority of moral and non-violent force, Gandhi saved the country from falling into the fatal error of embracing violence as a political creed.

Impatient youth had already begun to strain at the leash. Hume had stumbled upon a vast mass of literature containing ominous reports of plots and plans for violent movements — a discovery which lent a certain urgency to his eloquent appeal of March 1, 1883 to the graduates of Calcutta university to come forward in the service of their country. Lytton's reactionary administration and Ripon's failure—although the latter was given a memorable send-off by Indians on account of his personal goodness and popularity—had seriously weakened the case for moderation. From the point of view of political advance, as one sterile decade followed another, blunting the weapon of constitutionalism, the plea for violent action gained not only in urgency but also in plausibility. Gandhi's masterful personality, his unrivalled hold on the allegiance of nearly every patriotic section of the population, the awakening of the masses under his leadership, and the immense potentialities of his movement, gave hope that India could win her deliverance without employing the time-honoured methods of violence and hatred, thus putting out of action the exponents of the doctrine of the sword. At the initial stage, few people, especially those in foreign countries, appreciated the significance of Gandhi's movement. But the more discerning among them soon realised that this fragile man, the leader of a subject nation, was in his own quiet way making history by propounding and giving effect to a new political philosophy that never compromised with ends and means and whose only weapon was unarmed non-violent resistance, inspired by neither hatred nor

malice. Gandhi's attitude towards British policy was governed by Buddha's great words: 'If hatred responds to hatred when and where will hatred end?' It was because of his uncompromising stand on moral principles that he began to wield a kind of irresistible authority that was able not only to create a general will in the country but also make Indian nationalism a vital force.

But in the heat and turmoil of political controversy, Gandhi's abiding contribution to civilized behaviour was ignored and even condemned. 'In our own day,' declared a book on Indian history, 'by spreading abroad a spirit of lawlessness and by sharpening animosities between various sections of an immense society, extremism has gone far to make the successful working of any parliamentary system in India for ever impossible.'[27] Apart from their utter untenability, the value of such assertions was destroyed by their very vehemence and rashness. The stakes were immense and outbursts of temper against Indian resistance were perhaps unavoidable Thus we find the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare (afterwards Lord Templewood), who piloted the monumental Bill which later blossomed into the Government of India Act of 1935, declaring in all solemnity in the House of Commons on March 27, 1933 that 'the pledges of the past leave full liberty to Parliament in the choice of the time and manner of constitutional advance. I accept this principle. Although it was Lord Curzon who with his own hand wrote the words about responsible government into the Declaration of 1917, our hands to-day are free to take what course Parliament in its wisdom thinks proper in pursuance of that declaration.'[28] No doubts were allowed to be entertained about the actual significance of the constitutional proposals, for Hoare said. 'It will be almost impossible, short of a landslide, for the extremists to get control of the federal centre.' Even during the second world war, when the issue of democracy versus dictatorship was being fought on a

[27]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p. 559.

[28]*SPEECHES BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR SAMUEL HOARE*, Secretary of State for India, 1931-35, p 44.

global scale, another Secretary of State, L. S. Amery, declared significantly: 'Political status, whether described as Dominion Status or otherwise, is a thing which is not conferred like a decoration but is acquired by the power to exercise and defend it,'[29] implying that India had to wait indefinitely before she could hope to attain such a status. If only men like Hoare and Amery could by a supreme exercise of statesmanship, project their vision not too far but only a few years ahead, they and the system they championed would perhaps have been less rigid and less uncompromising in their attitude towards this country.

It is evident from this survey that the path of India's freedom was never smooth and that, besides the eventual triumph of statesmanship and goodwill in Britain, a combination of circumstances, including the impact of the Second World War, played a decisive part in hastening the country's emancipation in August 1947. One cannot say what course the history of India would have taken if such a favourable situation had not arisen Paradoxically, the failure of Ripon's Viceroyalty laid the foundation of the country's independence.

[29] Amery L S., *INDIA AND FREEDOM,* Oxford University Press, 1942, pp 49, 50.

8. LORD CURZON

LORD Curzon, a rising star of the Conservative party, abandoned a promising political career in his own country to fulfil his long-cherished ambition of becoming the Viceroy of India. He was in his fortieth year when he assumed this great office in January 1899 and had visited the country four times before. A 'cultivated flower' of Eton and Balliol, Curzon was brilliant, scholarly and masterful and fully shared the conviction of his country's governing class about its mighty destiny. He was 'ambitious that his Viceroyalty should be the most memorable in British imperial annals.'[1] He knew India and her problems, but he had an inveterate aversion for democracy as a principle of universal application. The suggestion that the people of this country had an inalienable right to administer their own affairs was to this brilliant autocrat an unheard of and an abhorrent heresy He looked upon India as a vast playground for giving free play to his vaulting ambitions, to his innate love of power, pomp and pageantry, and to his irrepressible urge for innovation. He believed in governing India in the old style as a benevolent despot like Akbar, for example, relying upon his own imperious will and unaided wisdom as an infallible guide to his policies and actions. It was entirely like him that during his seven years' stay in India he refused to take note of the rising tide of nationalism in the country Curzon was in fact one lap ahead of most of his imperialist contemporaries and it is a measure of his towering ambitions on behalf of his country that no less a person than Lord Salisbury, another front-rank missionary of empire, felt constrained to comment despairingly on his lieutenant's burning ardour for foreign adventures.[2] Before proceeding to discuss the

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[1]Magnus Sir Philip, *KIT*
LIST, John Murray.

[2]Earl of Ronaldshay;
Liveright, 1928, V

details of Curzon's Indian administration, it would be useful to make a broad survey of the government of his three predecessors

On the retirement of Ripon in December 1884, he was succeeded by Lord Dufferin, an Irishman of romantic descent, who had won his laurels in different parts of the empire as a competent, eloquent and genial diplomat. He was old when he accepted the Indian assignment and, being a firm believer in continuity, was content to watch the administration functioning on pre-determined lines. 'The Marquis of Ripon and his predecessors,' he wrote, 'have prepared the soil, delved and planted. It will be my more humble duty to watch, water, prune, and train'[3] By his masterly inaction, persuasiveness and geniality, he succeeded in winning the confidence and co-operation of the European business community and the permanent officials, both of whom had been deeply offended by Ripon's liberalism.

The Russo-Afghan dispute over the village of Panjdeh, which might well have developed into a major war involving Britain, was amicably settled partly on account of Dufferin's good offices. But the greatest credit for averting the disaster should rightly go to Amir Abdur Rahman, who was on a visit to the Viceroy at Rawalpindi when the clash between the Russian and Afghan troops occurred. Abdur Rahman was indeed one of the foremost statesmen of his time and was determined not to precipitate a conflict between Russia and Britain, being convinced that a war between the two countries would be fought on Afghan soil. 'Afghanistan,' he declared, 'was between two millstones and it had been already ground to powder.' He employed similar expressive language about the parlous condition of his kingdom in his Autobiography He wrote: 'My country is like a poor goat on whom the lion and the bear have both fixed their eyes and without the protection and help of the Almighty Deliverer the victim cannot escape very long.'[4]

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[3]Lord Curzon, *BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN INDIA*, Vol. II Cassell, 1925, p 245

[4]Roberts P E, *A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE BRITISH DEPENDENCIES: INDIA*, Part II, Clarendon Press, p 475.

The danger from the lion was, however, always much greater than from the other beast. The sagacious Amir saved his country from a terrible holocaust by declaring his doubt whether Panjdeh really belonged to him, thus allowing the Russians to have their own way. The crisis called for the mobilization of the army in India involving a severe strain on the country's finances. It also gave an invaluable opportunity to the princes to make a display of their devotion and loyalty to the British Raj by offering to place the resources of their states at its disposal. From this offer arose in 1889 the Imperial Service Troops, raised and maintained by the princes for the benefit of their overlords.

Another notable 'achievement' of Dufferin was the annexation of Upper Burma King Thibaw was a misguided monarch who had the temerity to assert and exercise the rights of sovereignty in his own country, little realising that the conquerors of Lower Burma would not allow any such claims to go unchallenged It was perfectly easy to call the King of Ava a bad name and then hound him out of his country. He was condemned as a ruthless tyrant and as being guilty of 'ominous and deliberate intrigues' with a foreign power against the British. The Burmese episode furnishes a striking example of the strong and the powerful complaining about the aggressions of the weak. Attempts to establish a French bank in Mandalay did not involve any manner of threat to the security of the British empire, nor was it the concern of Dufferin or his government to feel revolted by the domestic eccentricities of Thibaw, the ruler of an independent country. In reality, it was the bellicosity of the British commercial community and its dreams of abounding profits that culminated in the war against Upper Burma and its speedy annexation. As usual, India was forced to bear the burden of the expansionist policy. On January 1, 1886, the British empire gained an accession of territory larger than France, its unfortunate ruler being reduced to the status of a pensioner.

The Indian National Congress, which eventually became the citadel and the exemplar of Indian nationalism, came into existence during Dufferin's regime. It, however, required no great tolerance on the part of the Viceroy to allow the Congress to be born because both then and for many years later it was loyal to British connection to the core of its being.

Dufferin, whose record in India was, on his own admission, by no means brilliant, gave place to Lord Lansdowne in December 1888. In spite of his wide and varied experience, the new Viceroy failed to make any useful contribution to the Indian administration. The country's economic distress was greatly aggravated by the decline in the exchange value of the rupee, which fell from about 2s in 1870 to the lowest point of 1s. 1d. in 1891. The fall began from 1873 consequent on the demonetisation of silver in Germany and the Latin Union. A debtor country in relation to Britain, India was called upon to pay some 50 per cent. more for her imports from that country, while the value of her exports declined considerably. To meet the growing obligations of his government, Lansdowne had recourse to the reimposition of the unpopular income tax and enhanced the levy of the even more obnoxious salt tax.

In 1889, the Viceroy deprived the ruler of Kashmir of his ruling powers on vague and unconfirmed charges, thus causing a good deal of flutter in the dovecots of princely India. Considerable stir was also caused in England and pressure on the Government in Parliament led to the restoration of his powers to the Maharaja in 1905. The action of Lansdowne in deposing the Khan of Kalat in favour of his son on account of his sadistic tendencies was fully justified and the change in the rulership was effected with the assent of the *sardars* of the state. The Manipur episode was more serious since the dispute over the succession to the *gadi* had led to widespread disorders in this border state of Assam. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, who had been sent to Manipur to restore order in the state, was foully murdered and, although, as we saw in an earlier chapter, the chief offenders were executed, the integrity of

the state remained unaffected. No stresses and strains could affect the doctrine: once a state always a state.

Lansdowne belonged to the aggressive forward school of Lytton and regarded the separate existence of Afghanistan as a perpetual danger to the security of the British Indian empire against the so-called Russian menace. His cavalier treatment of Abdur Rahman was deeply resented by that great ruler. 'There never was a time,' says a competent writer, 'since 1838, when Simla was more actively the centre of ambitions and of designs beyond the Indus.'[5] The same writer quotes Sir Auckland Colvin as saying: "The most favoured type of Indian official was no longer the provincial Governor or the sagacious Resident, but that Warden of the Marches of Baluchistan, Sir Robert Sandeman, whose unique aim was to extend the zone of British influence beyond the frontier, and whose method was to participate in tribal dissensions, and to benefit by them. "Sandemania," which had proved so contagious, then first became epidemic in high quarters." The studied attempts to bring under British control the entire tribal belt, some 25,000 miles in extent, lying between the British Indian frontier and the Afghan boundary line and the aggressive action of the British at Gilgit and Chitral, gave good reasons for the Amir of Afghanistan to fear that his allies once again contemplated serious infractions of his sovereignty and his jurisdiction over the tribesmen. But, whatever his private feelings about the British, the astute Amir missed no opportunity of committing them to a policy of peaceful and friendly relations towards his state. In 1893, he concluded an agreement with Sir Mortimer Durand, by which the boundary line between his country and India was determined. The drawing of the famous Durand line led to the inclusion of the fiercely freedom-loving Afridis of the Khyber region, the Mahsuds, the Waziris, the Swat tribes and the chiefships of Chitral and Gilgit within British jurisdiction By the same compact, the subsidy payable to the Amir was raised from twelve lakhs to eighteen lakhs of

[5]Dutt Romesh, *INDIA IN THE VICTORIAN AGE*, Kegan Paul, 1904, p.446.

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rupees. Thus, the ardent champions of the forward policy succeeded in tying the mill-stone of the tribal region round India's neck and immense sums of money were squandered away year after year in an attempt to keep that turbulent territory quiet. With a laconism worthy of his keen perception, Abdur Rahman declared, when commenting on the outcome of the Durand mission, 'Though England does not want any piece of Afghanistan, still she never loses a chance of getting one—and this friend has taken more than Russia has.'

Lansdowne's regime saw the passing of the Indian Councils Act of 1892 which, from the point of view of constitutional progress, amounted to nothing. It, however, enlarged both the size and the functions of the legislative councils. A feeble form of elective principle was introduced into the constitution of the councils by liberalising the modes of nominating non-official members The Act also permitted the discussion of the annual budget. Nevertheless, it was a wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory statute, although the legislative council furnished a convenient forum for men like Gokhale to voice the country's aspirations.

Lansdowne had a fantastic conception of India which he described as a land of many countries. Such descriptions and definitions were more freely employed in later years when the issue of constitutional progress assumed greater importance so that the plea for reform could always be sidetracked by detailing the difficulties in the way of its adoption. Lansdowne was succeeded by Lord Elgin, a good man, whose best claim to the office was that his father had been the Viceroy of India. He played far too much into the hands of the ambitious group among the permanent officials and rendered his term a nightmare as much for the man-made calamities as for the wrathful visitations of nature.

Financial stringency compelled the new Viceroy to reimpose the old general duty of 5 per cent. on imports, except on cotton goods. Following a vigorous condemnation of the invidious distinction, the import duty was later

extended to cotton manufactures as well, but by yielding to Lancashire's unjust outcry, the Government saddled the Indian cotton piecegoods with a countervailing excise duty of 5 per cent. No amount of agitation on the part of the Indian producers against the injustice yielded any results, although in 1896 both duties were scaled down to 3½ per cent. The Indian enterprise, which also included British producers, persisted in its campaign against the Government's blatant partiality for Lancashire and succeeded in 1925 in securing the abolition of the excise duty. The excise was, however, revived by the Government of free India in 1949 in replacement of the salt tax which was abolished. The revenue from the excise on mill cloth has increased enormously and is being used to foster the development of the labour—intensive handloom sector and to finance the successive five year economic plans. The duty has come to stay.

Lansdowne's aggressive frontier policy yielded its baleful results in the reign of his successor. The British, who had been anxious to secure a decisive hold in the affairs of Chitral, believed that they could do so with impunity following the assassination of its ruler in January 1895. The Indian Government sent its agent at Gilgit to Chitral with a view to thrusting its oars into the state's troubled waters. The warlike chiefs called on the agent to withdraw and on his refusal to do so, clashes occurred which eventually enveloped the entire Pathan country in a full-scale warfare. The frontiermen fought with great fury and determination, being thoroughy roused by the foreigners' policy of penetration into their mountain fortresses. The British suffered some of the severest defeats when their troops were being withdrawn in December 1897. But neither tragedy nor expense deterred them from persevering with their forward policy.

Even more terrible than the frontier conflagration were the two scourges of famine and plague that struck the country in 1896. Though a familiar calamity, famine was most widespread this time and devastated large portions of southern, central and northern India. Plague was, how-

ever, a new visitation and when it appeared in Bombay in 1896, neither the authorities nor the population knew how best to grapple with the strange terror. In September 1897, there was a sudden and alarming increase in the epidemic in Poona and the situation was handled with a singular lack of imagination and understanding by the plague administration. Rand, the plague administrator, detailed British troops to visit Indian homes, whose privacy was ruthlessly violated, while their inmates were indiscriminately subjected to humiliation and hardship. In fact, Rand and his men became far more pestilential than the plague itself. Later, the Government conceded that the 'plague riots' were a consequence of the 'repressive measures' adopted by its over-zealous officials. At Matheran, a hill-station near Bombay, even distinguished Indians like Badruddin Tyabji, a judge of the Bombay High Court, and Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, the great national leader, were called upon in 1899 to submit to humiliating regulations.[6]

At Poona, Lokmanya Tilak was roused to indignation at the excesses of the officials in dealing with a danger where the whole-hearted co-operation of the public was so imperative. He himself set a noble example by organising relief measures and accompanied search parties as a volunteer to restore confidence among the panic-stricken people.[7] At the same time, through the columns of his Marathi weekly, *Kesari*, he repeatedly warned the authorities about the unwisdom of enforcing the plague regulations in defiance of the susceptibilities of the people. He had good reason to do so, for even expectant and nursing mothers were crowded together with men in the segregation camps.[8] Unfortunately, Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst were murdered on June 22, 1897, the day when the British community was celebrating the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria's accession. It was a dastardly crime, which no sane elements in the city approved, but the Government thought otherwise

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[6] Mody Sir H P., *SIR PHIROZESHAH MEHTA*, The Times Press, 1921, pp 411, 412

[7] Andrews C F. and Mukerji Girija, *THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE CONGRESS*, G Allen & Unwin, 1938, pp 191-192.

[8] Tahmankar D. V, *LOKMANYA TILAK*, John Murray, 1956, p.75.

and believed that Tilak was the arch instigator of the murders. All enmities and antagonisms are brought to an end in the presence of death, but the Anglo-Indians in Poona refused to follow this civilized practice. Indian gentlemen of the eminence of Sir Cowasji Jehangir and Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, the latter a scholar of great repute, who accompanied Rand's funeral, were refused admission to the cemetery while a Parsi lady, who had gone to place a wreath on the coffin, was similarly turned out.[9]

Tilak became an especial target of British anger. On July 27, 1897, he was arrested on charges of sedition and convicted by a Judge of the Bombay High Court, who, resorting to an astonishing interpretation of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, declared that 'disaffection' meant 'simply the absence of affection'! A great scholar, Tilak, however, chose to become a politician and a man of action being prompted by the noble impulse of liberating his countrymen from foreign rule. He became the 'father of Indian unrest,' originally a term of reproach that was soon transformed into the highest tribute to the patriotism and courage of this indomitable leader. He gave a clarion call to his countrymen by declaring: 'Freedom is my birthright and I shall have it.' Tilak has been grossly misrepresented by his enemies In his own time, he was described as a seditionist, an anarchist and a revolutionary. He was none of these and was in fact as constitutional-minded as men like Gokhale and Phirozeshah Mehta, but with this difference that he was not afraid of forging sanctions against the Government if the methods of prayer and petition proved ineffective, as indeed they did. He rightly declared that the only 'constitution' that had been given to India was the Penal Code He abhorred political murders and sincerely believed that they tended to retard 'to a great extent the pace of our political progress.' His definition of sedition is an epitome of his political philosophy. 'To create or to lead,' he declared, 'peaceful opposition to foreign rule and to rouse a spirit of resistance is not sedition.' Indeed, the author of the celebrated phrase 'Res-

[9]Tahmankar D. V., *LOKMANYA TILAK*, John Murray, 1956, p. 81.

ponsive Co-operation' could not have been a violent enemy of the British and yet he was persecuted with unexampled malevolence until his death in 1920.

Thus, when Curzon took the helm of the Indian administration in January 1899 from the incompetent hands of Elgin, the country was passing through a phase of disillusionment which, if mishandled, could well develop into a mighty upheaval. Some of the staunch supporters of British rule had begun to have second thoughts on the benefits of such an unnatural connection. Dadabhai Naoroji, who pioneered India's cause for freedom from the economic point of view, became increasingly forthright in his condemnation of British Indian policy — often outstripping even Tilak in the bluntness of his reproach. He wrote: "The rulers say, 'we shall rule, but only as foreign invaders with the result of draining the country of its wealth, and killing millions by famine and plague, and starving scores of millions by poverty and destitution', while the ruled are saying for the first time 'that shall not be'."[10] The fearless old patriot went on to say that the British prevented Indians from plundering one another so that 'they themselves might plunder all'. Self-government, he asserted, was the only remedy for the country's 'woes and wrongs'. It was open to Curzon either to enlist India's co-operation to his administration by wisely conceding the justice of her moderate demands or to inflame the opinion of her educated classes by wrong-headed policies, utterances and actions.

Curzon's appointment was at first popular. Knowledgeable Indians applauded his drive, initiative and boldness. He worked for eleven hours a day—a busy smith upon whose anvil there was always some measure or the other to be hammered into shape or out of shape. His restless energy and his penetrating intellect roamed the whole field of administration and often far beyond it in search of innovations. He showed his fearlessness by punishing an entire regiment for attempting to screen a particularly revolting

[10]Masani Sir R P., *DADABHAI NAOROJI*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1939, p.435.

offence committed by its soldiers against an Indian woman in Burma. Similar exemplary punishment was inflicted on many officers and men of a famous cavalry regiment, the 9th Lancers, following the brutal assault by two troopers on a cook who died later. Such firmness even against his own countrymen greatly increased the Viceroy's prestige and reputation among the Indian people.

Curzon deprecated the slowness of the Government in the transaction of public business and strove hard to arrest the exuberant growth of noting on departmental files. Commenting on the movement of a particularly important document, he wrote in words that have justly become famous: 'Round and round like the diurnal revolution of the earth went the file, stately, solemn, sure and slow; and now, in due season, it has completed its orbit, and I am invited to register the concluding stage.'[11] He attempted to imbue the administration with his own spirit and sense of urgency in dealing with public matters and complained of the immensity of his undertaking. 'Nothing has been done,' he wrote in April 1899, 'hitherto under six months. When I suggest six weeks, the attitude is one of pained surprise; if six days, one of pathetic protest; if six hours, one of stupefied resignation.'[12] Officials, long accustomed to somnolent ways of working, dreaded and cursed this great crusader against sloth, slovenliness and the *status quo*.

The peasant drew the sympathetic attention of Curzon who declared that the tiller of the soil 'should be the first and final object of every Viceroy's regard'. He introduced liberal principles of land revenue suspension and remission in order to afford real relief to the farming population in times of scarcity and encouraged the establishment of co-operative credit societies as a step towards liberating the peasants from the hold of the moneylenders. The Punjab legislation protected the landlords of the province from expropriation, while attempts were made to promote cordial relations between landlords and peasants in the rest of

[11]Fraser Lovat, *INDIA UNDER CURZON*, Heinemann, 1911, pp.378, 379

[12]Earl of Ronaldshay, *THE LIFE OF LORD CURZON*, Vol. II, Boni & Liveright, 1928, p 27.

India. He realised the value of applying scientific principles to agricultural methods and set up an Agricultural Department to further this end. He laid the foundation of the Agricultural Institute at Pusa—a project that was rendered possible by the generous donation of an American traveller, H. Phipps, whose name was given to the Research Laboratory. He also extended the area under irrigation and accepted the recommendation of Sir C. Scott-Moncrief's Commission which envisaged the irrigation of an additional area of 6½ million acres at an estimated cost of fortyfour crores of rupees. Under his direction experts drew up a programme for the construction of new railway lines. When he came, there were 27,000 miles of railway in India, to which he added 6,000 miles more. The administration of the steadily-expanding railways was committed to the care of a newly-created Railway Board of experts. A Commerce and Industry Department was also set up and was put in charge of an additional member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The reforming zeal of Curzon was so all-pervasive that few departments of Government were left in an outmoded condition. A large part of the credit for modernising the administration should go to this restless missionary of efficiency.

India is deeply grateful to his memory for ensuring the protection and preservation of her ancient monuments. Long before him, Lords Hastings and Dalhousie had noted with sorrow the steady disintegration of the country's great cultural heritage and had made some attempts to save them from ruin. All kinds of vandalism were practised against the monuments, the most common and insidious one being the scrawling of their names by visitors with intent presumably to transmit their anonymity to posterity. Nothing was being done to protect them from the combined assaults of man and nature. Curzon saw the enormity of allowing the precious gifts of the ancient civilization to slide into oblivion. Like Warren Hastings, he showed a sincere veneration for truly great works of art and literature. Speaking on the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904, Curzon declared with becoming humility: 'As a pilgrim at the

shrine of beauty I have visited them (historic remains), but as a priest in the temple of duty have I charged myself with their reverent custody and their studious repair.' He recovered the immortal Taj Mahal from irretrievable ruin and spent £50,000 on repairs at Agra alone. His admiration for the ancient relics knew no racial or sectarian barriers and he devoted the same impartial and loving care to the restoration of all monuments in the country that deserved preservation. He showed equal solicitude for the country's art industries and handicrafts. He made a successful plea for the appointment of a Director-General of Archaeology and was fortunate in securing the services of Sir John Marshall, whose work in unearthing the ancient sites and securing new and valuable material for India's ancient history is well-known. One may truly say that it was Curzon who was largely instrumental in rediscovering for Indians the glory of their ancient heritage.

Curzon, who had an innate love for splendour, conceived the grand project of rearing a mighty public building at Calcutta to rival the unique Taj. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 gave him the opportunity to fulfil this desire and generous donations from princes and chiefs poured in. Within three months as much as £220,000 was collected but much bigger sums of money were required to complete the building. It was a costly memorial, utterly out of place in the prevailing conditions of wretchedness, and was completed long after Curzon had left India. Even more inexcusable was his expenditure on the Delhi Darbar in 1903, held to announce the accession of Edward VII to the throne. The show cost a famine-stricken and starving India £200,000—a sum considered extremely trivial by the Viceroy in relation to the country's teeming millions. Curzon's panegyrist, Lovat Fraser, who also belonged to the regiment of imperial handy-men in his own small way, claimed: 'As a pageant the Durbar was without precedent in the history of Asia, and probably its magnificence will never again be equalled.' Nationalist India, however, looked upon it as 'a pompous pageantry to a perishing people'.

The construction of the Victoria Memorial Hall and the staging of the Delhi Darbar were only two among many other examples of a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict that existed between the ideas and ideals of the British rulers and the wants and wishes of the Indian people. Curzon's famous Despatch of 1901, which was largely a reply to the closely-reasoned criticism of the Government of India's land policies by experts like R. C. Dutt and other retired British officials of the Indian Civil Service, was perhaps adequate as an exercise in meeting argument by counter-argument. Whether the incidence of the land revenue crushed the Indian peasantry or not—and many experts affirmed that it did — nothing substantial was being done by the Government to stop their growing impoverishment and distress. In the absence of a well-regulated economic policy, designed to benefit the masses, the so-called nation-building projects, however earnestly and sincerely put forward, merely tinkered with the problem. The issue was indeed fundamental: was the British Government in India prepared to spend the entire revenues of the country upon its people? It would not, for, if it did, the very *raison d'etre* of its being in India would have been defeated. A crushing military burden, a top-heavy administration, with the higher posts being manned almost exclusively by the British, a virtual subordination of the country's fiscal, commercial and industrial policies to the interests of Britain, and periodic exhibitions of British might and majesty without counting the cost, became the inevitable concomitants of British rule in India. Thus, the solicitude of men like Curzon for the downtrodden Indian peasantry lacked the sovereign quality of redeeming these unfortunate men from their miserable plight.

Curzon's attitude towards the princely states was straightforward. Like Mayo before him and like many other discerning persons, he knew the immense value of the states to the stability of British rule in India. He brushed aside as so much clap-trap the princes' assertions about their 'sovereignty' and their rights and privileges. When installing the Nawab of Bhawalpur on the *gadi* on

November 12, 1903, the Viceroy gave a quietus to their pretensions by declaring: 'The sovereignty of the Crown is everywhere unchallenged. It has itself laid down the limitations of its own prerogatives.' A hater of inefficiency, he called on the princes to justify and not to abuse the authority committed to them. 'I claim him (the prince),' he declared, 'as my colleague and partner,' and added, 'he cannot remain *vis-a-vis* of the Empire a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress and *vis-a-vis* of his own people, a frivolous or irresponsible despot.' In 1900, he issued the famous circular interdicting the princes' frequent tours of foreign countries. Repeated absences by them from the country, the circular declared, 'should be regarded as a dereliction, and not as a discharge, of public duty'.

Curzon was, however, needlessly sanguine in expecting the states' reformation by such exhortations and directives. So long as the weapon of correction was denied to their people, any improvement in their affairs was a forlorn hope. It is a measure of the depravity of the princely order that one of its members, 'a man of enormous size, weighing something like twenty-four stone,' went down on his knees and touched Curzon's feet with his head, the reason for such disgusting supplication being to win the great lord's favour.[13] Long years before this incident, a similar unseemly behaviour on the part of an important Maharaja was reported by Dalhousie who wrote that the man was 'eager to lick the dust below my feet'.[14] There were, of course, a few princes, who were not only independent-minded but genuinely patriotic Madhav Rao Sindhia, the worthy descendant of Mahadji, was one such outstanding man. He was able, conscientious and proud of his position both as a prince and as an Indian. His confidential correspondence with the omnipotent political department of the Government of India over his ruling powers reveals the calibre of the man In March 1899, Curzon wrote to the

[13]Lord Curzon, *LEAVES FROM A VICEROY'S NOTEBOOK*, Macmillan, 1926, p 43

[14]Baird J G.A , *PRIVATE LETTERS OF THE MARQUESS OF DALHOUSIE*, Blackwood, 1910, p 103.

Secretary of State about the young Maharaja almost in rapturous terms and paid him the highest compliment by saying that 'he rather reminds me of your humble servant', that is, Curzon himself. But even this great man was not exempt from the discourtesies and humiliations that were the inevitable lot of Indians Edwin Montagu wrote in his Diary: 'Sindhia told me this morning that once when he was in Delhi he was severely reprimanded for taking his *pugri* off after the Viceroy had left. He is not allowed to appear at dinner without his head covered.' He was forced to risk sunstroke when hunting in the company of the great sahibs.[15] It has been claimed that the Maharaja, with two other equally eminent Maratha princes, would perhaps have made history in India if there had been no *pax Britannica*. At any rate, Sindhia's conversation with Dr. M. R. Jayakar soon after the first World War reveals the nobility of his mind. Jayakar quotes the Maharaja as saying: 'I have considered the question (of India's independence) and I can assure you that, if that event happens and there is commotion in the country, I can do this,' (pointing to Saharanpur on the map) 'one foot in Saharanpur and the other in Poona. The territory between these two terminuses I shall keep safe for the benefit of our Government.'[16] The fact that the sole value of the princes lay in their usefulness to their overlords was realised and deeply resented by a few princes, but an overwhelming majority of them rejoiced in their own degradation.

To strengthen the loyalty of the princely order and its dependent nobles, Curzon established in 1901 an Imperial Cadet Corps, to which the young princes studying at the four Chiefs' Colleges were recruited. The scheme, however, envisaged military training for strictly limited numbers. The suggestion that these young men should be allowed to take a course at Sandhurst had been turned down earlier by the War Office.

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[15]Montagu Edwin, *AN INDIAN DIARY,* Heinemann, 1930, p 174.
[16]Jayakar Dr. M R, *THE STORY OF MY LIFE,* Vol I., Asia Publishing House, 1958-59, p.382.

An indefatigable traveller, Curzon visited forty states in six years. He gained a notable personal triumph and much advantage to his Government by winning, through direct negotiations, the Nizam's assent to the settlement of the Berar question which had defied solution for many decades. The Nizam, who was among the earliest southern princes to enter into subordinate relations with the East India Company, had agreed to pay for the subsidiary force that was maintained by the British. Thanks to the numerous illegitimate calls upon the revenues of his state, he fell into heavy arrears in his payment for the force which came to be known as the Hyderabad Contingent. By an agreement, concluded in 1853, the debt to the Company was discharged and the contingent taken over by the Indian Government in return for the cession, as long as necessary, of certain districts from the Nizam's dominion, including Berar. Some modifications to the Treaty of 1853 were effected in 1860. The arrangement gave rise to a good deal of misunderstanding as the annual surplus payable to the Nizam from the revenues of the assigned territory, after defraying the cost of maintaining the Contingent and of the civil administration, bore no relation whatsoever to the richness of the ceded province Curzon grasped the Berar nettle in 1903 in a personal discussion with the Nizam After its apprenticeship to British rule for half a century, the province could not be returned to the misgovernment of Hyderabad A request for its rendition made earlier, when Lord Salisbury was the Secretary of State for India, had been turned down. Curzon's arrangement, therefore, consisted in the merger of the Hyderabad Contingent into the Army in India and the release of a certain number of troops for service in Hyderabad. While accepting the nominal "sovereignty" of the Nizam, Berar was finally incorporated into British India and joined to the Central Provinces. The Nizam received a fixed payment of twenty-five lakhs of rupees a year. The ghost of Berar was, however, not laid till the dissolution of Hyderabad itself.

Curzon was an implacable foe of self-government for India and was tempted to regard Indian political aspirations

as a piece of impertinence. Apart from his inflexible determination to preserve and transmit the policy of paternalism in the Government of India, he did not hesitate to discourage the growth of even such innocuous institutions as the municipal bodies. The part played by him in the framing of the Calcutta Municipal Bill, so soon after his arrival in the country, illustrates his obstinate refusal to see the formidable omens under which India was marching into a new era. As far back as 1876, the Government of Bengal had introduced a certain measure of autonomy in the administration of Calcutta's municipal affairs by allowing the ratepayers to elect fifty commissioners and by limiting nominations by the Government to twenty-five. The scheme had worked well and inspite of 'many blunders', the city had made good progress in securing for its inhabitants most of the essential amenities of modern civic life. No less a person than the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, Sir Anthony Macdonnell, had complimented the Commissioners on their excellent work. Another Governor, however, decided to clip the wings of the Municipality—a pleasant undertaking in which Curzon himself heartily participated. He reduced the number of the elected members and brought it on par with the nominated ones so that with the official Chairman, deep inroads could be made into the autonomy of the municipality. Many, besides the Bengalis, regarded Curzon's action not only as Draconian, but as a deliberate attempt to discourage the local self-governing institutions in the country. The passage of the Bill through the Bengal Legislative Council on September 27, 1899 synchronised with the death anniversary of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Speaking against the measure, Surendranath Banerjea declared that it was perhaps fitting that 'the extinction of local self-government' in Calcutta should be ushered in on the death anniversary day of the 'greatest Bengali of modern times.' Twenty-eight Indian members of the Corporation resigned, while the national press condemned the new legislation in strong terms. The Congress, sitting at Lucknow, characterised it as being based on a reactionary policy 'subversive of local self-government'. R. C. Dutt

wrote: 'The most distinguished citizens of Calcutta, who had given years of their life to municipal work, retired from the scene.'[17] Presumably, this was precisely what Curzon and his Government wanted.

Perhaps, even more objectionable were Curzon's attempts to officialise universities and colleges which supplied the leadership to Indian nationalism. The need for the reform of higher education in the country was never in doubt and, as Gokhale pointed out during the debate on the Universities Bill, public opinion would have welcomed any improvement in the system if it was conceived on right lines. But in the name of efficiency, attempts were made to transform university senates and syndicates into packed bodies and to exercise rigid control over the recognition and conduct of affiliated colleges. Neither the Simla Conference, held in September 1901 under the presidency of Curzon who himself drafted all the one hundred and fifty resolutions, nor the Universities Commission, which reported in 1902 after a hasty and inadequate investigation, consisted of Indian representatives as if the matters in debate and under discussion were of no concern to them The contentions of men like Gokhale that the so-called reform would inevitably convert the universities into official bodies, could not be effectively challenged and were in fact confirmed later by another investigating body in 1917. The measure cast an undeserved aspersion on Indians and was, as Gokhale warned, calculated to perpetuate 'the narrow, bigoted and inexpansive rule of experts'. Phirozeshah Mehta drew attention to the observations of an influential Anglo-Indian paper which declared that the direction of university education in India should in future be 'under European control' and that the universities should be 'under the domination of the Government'.[18]

There is good reason to believe that this was also Curzon's intention. Apart from his rigorous exclusion of Indians from the various discussions and deliberations that culmi-

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[17]Dutt Romesh, *INDIA IN THE VICTORIAN AGE,* Kegan Paul, 1904, p 458.
[18]Mody Sir H P., *SIR PHIROZESHAH MEHTA,* The Times Press, 1921, p. 468.

nated in the Universities Act of 1904, he had long deluded himself with the belief that his country had made a capital mistake in 'consolidating the ruled and feeding their minds on a Western diet'. Since universities are the seed-bed of ability as well as of patriotism, nothing could be a more effective remedy for the mistakes of the past than the device of reducing to a trickle the mighty flow of educated men from these sources. Such a course of action would, moreover, lend plausibility to his arrogant assertion that Indians were 'unequal to the responsibilities of high office'. This reading of Curzon's educational policy has received confirmation from an entirely independent source. One may not, and indeed cannot, approve of the language employed by Sir Philip Magnus on this issue, but his conclusions are unexceptionable. He says that Curzon's 'attempt to stop the growth of a seditious intellectual proletariat by checking the flow of Indian candidates for university degrees caused great ill feeling'.[19] Indian opinion naturally protested against such adroit manoeuvres to put the clock of progress back and the opposition proved to be the dress rehearsal for a truly convulsive movement against the partition of Bengal.

Among the many blunders committed by Curzon in India, the partition of Bengal was the worst. The plea that the province had grown unwieldy, impairing administrative efficiency in the outlying eastern districts, was not wholly invalid. But this was only part of the reason and not the whole of it because separation of non-Bengali areas would have made the province more easily manageable. Enlightened Bengal had been the spear-head of India's increasingly assertive nationalism and it became the anxious concern of all who desired to keep the country permanently for the British to check, if not to stifle, the waxing strength of the nationalist movement. The charge that the mass unrest, which the partition created, was instigated by the Calcutta lawyers and the Calcutta press, has no foundation in fact, although they certainly played an active part in exposing the untenability of the Government's standpoint.

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[19]Magnus Sir Philip, *KITCHENER*, John Murray, 1958, p 197.

'We felt,' wrote Surendranath Banerjea, 'that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked.'[20] The veteran national leader, Dadabhai Naoroji, characterised the partition as a 'bad blunder', while, Gokhale, that exemplar of moderation and mildness, condemned it in even more withering terms. In his presidential address to the Congress in 1905, he declared that the partition would 'always stand as a complete illustration of the worst features of the present system of bureaucratic rule—its utter contempt for public opinion; its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people....'[21] Sir Henry Cotton stated it as his considered opinion that the measure was a deliberate attempt to 'shatter the unity and to disintegrate the feelings of solidarity which are established in the Province.' He added that it was 'part and parcel of Lord Curzon's policy to enfeeble the growing power and to destroy the political tendencies of a patriotic spirit'.

The retribution that overtook Curzon's government for such calculated injustice was swift and terrible Bengal rose to a man and the rest of India ranged itself solidly behind it. The *swadeshi* movement, which had grown with the political awakening, received a tremendous impetus and encouragement of home-made products to the exclusion of British goods became a cardinal principle of political action The new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam came into existence in October 1905 Five years earlier, November 1900, Curzon had written with great complaisancy to the Secretary of State for India· 'My own belief is that Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise.' How short-sighted this great Olympian was! He did not realise that by his unstatesmanlike utterances and actions, he was unwittingly making his Viceroyalty a turning-point in the history of Indian nationalism This great man, whose political bigotry blinded him to considerations of right and wrong, forfeited the esteem of the Indian people by his

[20]Banerjea Surendranath, *A NATION IN MAKING,* Oxford University Press, 1925, p 187.
[21]Gokhale G K., *SPEECHES OF THE HONOURABLE MR. G K. GOKHALE,* G A Natesan, p 476

excesses. He, who had vehemently protested to the Secretary of State against the home Government's tendency of ignoring the growing strength of public opinion in India, was himself guilty of this offence. What is even worse, from the sacred seat of learning, the University of Calcutta, he hurled a gratuitous insult at the Indian people by declaring that 'the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception.'

Indeed, it had become customary for Curzon to call nearly all others, except probably himself, liars. When he extended this compliment to Kitchener, whom, in a letter, he virtually accused of lying, the bluff soldier recorded his reactions in these telling words: 'Curzon has rather surpassed himself, I think, by writing me the last letter of the enclosed correspondence. In old days I suppose I should have called him out on it and shot him like a dog for his grossly insulting letter.'[22] Conceit in Curzon often rose to Himalayan heights and hurt him as deeply as it cruelly wronged others.

It is remarkable that in his quarrel with Indians, Curzon's injustice prevailed, at least for the time being, but in the controversy between himself and Kitchener, justice, which was now on his side, spread its wings and fled away. For the Viceroy it was indeed the 'unkindest cut,' for he himself had desired to have Kitchener as his Commander-in-Chief. To the British people, who worshipped his shadow, Kitchener was an incomparable hero who had risen to eminence by his 'obsessional thoroughness and drive' He came to India with the firm conviction that the Russian menace to this country was real. In Egypt and South Africa, he had exercised absolute control over the army and expected to wield similar powers in India, but there was in this country a military department under the direction of a member with a seat in the Viceroy's Council. The member was also a soldier and, although his responsibilities were confined to the non-combatant army services, he was expected to advise the civilian Viceroy upon broad aspects of military policy. Kitchener objected to an arrangement

[22]Magnus Sir Philip, *KITCHENER,* John Murray, 1958, p 223.

that interposed between himself and the head of the Government a junior officer of lesser military experience with the right to scrutinize and comment on the plans and projects formulated by his senior, the Commander-in-Chief. He demanded the abolition of this office, but Curzon opposed it by pointing, with considerable justification, to the danger of the army chief gaining undesirable ascendancy over the civil government in the absence of a restraining influence exerted through the military member The Viceroy was fully supported by his colleagues, but he was let down by the authorities in England who, in the troubled state of their imperial affairs, preferred to retain the goodwill of Kitchener, the supposed man of destiny. Curzon, whose term of office had been extended and who had returned to India from a long leave in England, in December 1904, resigned in August of the following year and went home a few months later, burdened with a sense of defeat and bitterness Indians, to whom the army was even more alien than the civil administration, watched the quarrel between the two self-willed men like curious spectators. From their point of view, there were fewer estimable qualities in Kitchener than in his rival. Carnage was Kitchener's religion and he practised Lord Fisher's 'Three R's of War'—Ruthless, Relentless, Remorseless—with exemplary thoroughness. He pressed Lord Minto, Curzon's successor, to make a liberal use of repression in order to suppress Indian unrest This man, whose military abilities were never fully tested, believed that he had been unjustly cheated of the Nobel Peace Prize! 'Nobel,' he exclaimed, 'was a dreamer He was no realist but a weaver of fantasies. How could such a man understand what our Empire means for the future of the whole of mankind!'[23] That was the noon of the empire How could men like Kitchener, Curzon and a host of others belonging to the British ruling class, realise that noon is always followed by evening and night?

Curzon's foreign policy was a mere variant of his attitude of arrogance, indifference and contempt towards the

[23]Magnus Sir Philip, KITCHENER, John Murray, 1958, p 232

subject peoples. The writ of England must run throughout the length and breadth of the world and opposition to it should be countered by chastisement. Curzon called President Kruger of South Africa 'a mere speck of froth on the surface of the ocean' and asked the Secretary of State for India to 'punish' the Amir of Afghanistan or decide to 'put up our shutters and close business.' He would have very much liked to reduce Iran to the status of a feudatory state and since this could not be done he complained that English policy towards that country had been 'a page of history which makes one alternately laugh with derision and groan with despair.' About the pacific people of the Himalayan enclave of Tibet, he declared: 'Nothing can or will be done with the Tibetans until they are frightened.' Curzon's conception of the independence of foreign countries was unique and both he and the class to which he belonged believed that there was no validity in any international law or international morality if it conflicted with British interests.

By a rare display of realism, he, however, withdrew the British Indian troops, numbering more than 10,000 from the storm-tossed North-West Frontier region, making the tribal forces responsible for the peace of the territory, while concentrating the Indian army on the administrative border. He created the North-West Frontier Province by joining to the Pathan country five settled districts inside British India and put it in charge of a Chief Commissioner directly responsible to the Viceroy. He transferred the responsibility of controlling the frontier affairs from the Punjab Government to his own administration. The creation of the new province called for a change in the name of the old North-West Provinces which thenceforward came to be known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. It is now known as Uttar Pradesh.

Curzon believed that, with the death of the great Amir Abdur Rahman in 1901, he could succeed in bringing Afghanistan within the British sphere of influence far more effectively than was possible in the lifetime of that sagacious monarch. But Habibullah, his successor, who had per-

formed the rare feat of gaining the Afghan throne without bloodshed, was equally determined to regulate his relations with the British Indian Government strictly on the basis of the agreement of 1893. During Curzon's absence on leave in England, the acting Viceroy, Lord Ampthill, sent Sir Louis Dane on a mission to the Amir with whom an agreement was signed in 1905 on terms favourable to the Afghan ruler.

As in many other parts of the world, England claimed exclusive jurisdiction over the territories covered by the Persian Gulf. She asserted prescriptive rights over the Gulf on the ground that it had been under her virtual control since the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ormuz in 1621. She showed much concern over Russian activities in Northern Persia and, as a counterpoise, Curzon suggested: 'If Russia announced a line to Sistan, I would myself at once threaten the Shah with an occupation of Sistan; and I would undertake to have my men there before Russia could get there' Attempts by countries like Germany, France and Russia to secure concessions in the Gulf through the chieftains in the region were frustrated by minatory speeches by British statesmen. Curzon actually sent a naval expedition against the Sultan of Muscat to punish him for entertaining a French request for concessions in his territory. The declaration of Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, in May 1903 has remained a classic among the utterances of imperial statesmen. He announced that the intrusion of any foreign influence in the Persian Gulf would be regarded by Britain 'as a very grave menace to British interests which we should certainly resist with all the means at our disposal.' Such blatant assertion of British rights in foreign territories provoked the resentment of other European nations, some of which bided their own time to hit back. The first and the second World War were a direct consequence of international jealousies. In 1892, a French statesman felt constrained to repudiate the British claim to preserve order in the Persian Gulf by themselves and to be the sole arbiters of all disputes between the Arabian, the Persian and the Turkish

chiefs. These rights, he affirmed, were 'exercised in a form European diplomacy had never recognised.'

Curzon's role in the Tibetan episode was even more offensive. A harmless people, inherently incapable of causing any serious injury to their neighbours, the Tibetans desired to be left in peace so that they might pursue their simple and long-established way of life with undeviating fidelity. Since the early years of the eighteenth century, their country owed a form of allegiance to China that had never been well-defined, but two of the Chinese Government's representatives lived at Lhasa to exercise general superintendence over the Tibetan administration. With the weakening of the Manchu dynasty, the Dalai Lama, who happened to be an unusually energetic ruler, desired an alliance with the Russians, presumably with the object of effecting a complete severance of his country's relations with China. He was to some extent assisted in his moves by one Dorjieff, a Mongolian Buriat and a Russian subject by birth, but the Russians disowned any intention of implicating themselves in the Tibetan affairs. Curzon had, however, made up his mind and the fact that the Russians were incapable of menacing India's security from the Tibetan side did not deter him from embarking upon a course of aggression against an unoffending and helpless people. Against its better judgment, the home government sanctioned, under Curzon's pressure, the despatch of a mission to Tibet. The Viceroy flagrantly misused the reluctantly given permission, which eventually led to the occupation of Lhasa by Sir Francis Younghusband in August 1904. The massacre of seven hundred poorly-armed Tibetans in the so-called battle of Guru in March and the imposition of extremely harsh terms on the unfortunate Tibetans by Younghusband caused a deep revulsion of feeling in England and brought no small measure of obloquy to Curzon and his Government. The expedition was in fact 'conceived in arrogance and imperfect knowledge' and deserved all the criticism that was directed

against it.[24] Three years later, Britain and Russia agreed to look upon Tibet as a buffer state and formally recognised China's suzerainty over that country. Due to protracted and serious distractions in the land of its overlord, Tibet managed to exercise a great measure of domestic independence The relations between the two countries were, however, put on a new basis by the agreement of May 1951 which, besides promising internal freedom to the Tibetans, guaranteed not to make any changes in the status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama. In the early months of 1959 trouble suddenly flared up in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, resulting in the precipitate flight of the Dalai Lama to India. In April, the spiritual leader and his party were given asylum in India. The Dalai Lama has summed up the Sino-Tibetan relations in these pregnant words: 'China and Tibet are like fire and wood.' China was evidently deeply offended by the kindly and civilized behaviour of India towards the fugitive spiritual ruler of Tibet and occupied extensive border areas of this country on the untenable ground that they formed part of her own territory. Her aggression and her cynical disregard for the principles of *Panchshila* have caused much surprise and resentment in India.

Curzon began his Indian Viceroyalty in warm sunshine and ended it in bleak darkness. Both his achievements and failures were of gigantic proportions. He was a man of strong likes and dislikes and was most uncompromising in defending his own prerogatives. He demanded unquestioning obedience from his subordinates and spared no efforts to reduce the status of the premier presidencies of Bombay and Madras — 'those picturesque excrescences on the surface of the most specialised service in the world.' A man of brilliant intellect, he spoke and wrote brilliantly. Professor Gilbert Murray said of him: 'Here is a man who could set off the most trifling commonplaces in the most superb ornaments of language '[25] In spite of his arrogance,

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[24] *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 754.

[25] Banerjea Surendranath, *A NATION IN MAKING*, Oxford University Press, 1925, p 261.

his aloofness and his unpopularity, India will continue to respect his name as the greatest preserver and protector of her ancient monuments and as the foremost inspirer of the country's historical research. Bishop Whitehead wrote that he failed to see 'a single definite allusion' to self-rule for India in Curzon's speeches.[26] That indeed was the man's incurable infirmity. In his speech at the Byculla Club, Bombay, on November 16, 1905 on the eve of his departure for his country, Curzon declared. 'I search my conscience and I ask myself who and what are the real Indian people?' Such supercilious statements had a deep purpose behind them, namely, the repudiation of India's aspirations for self-government. His attitude on this issue has been described thus: 'It was self-government yesterday and self-government tomorrow, but never self-government to-day.'[27] Curzon was, however, not the only Viceroy who believed that the sun of the British empire would set with India's secession from it, but the methods pursued by some of his successors to avert such a calamity were radically different from his own.

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[26]Whitehead The Rt. Rev. Henry, *INDIAN PROBLEMS*, Constable, 1924, p.215.

[27]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 750.

9. LORD MINTO

Lord Minto, who succeeded Curzon in 1905, became the progenitor of the constitutional reforms that led Indian politics into wrong channels and culminated in the country's partition It is, however, doubtful whether he knew at the time he assumed office that he would be called upon to play a negative role on such a massive scale. He was an old and indolent patrician who, like Cornwallis after Wellesley's high-handed regime, would have preferred to spend his time in India as a pleasant sojourn In spite of his high compliments to the new Viceroy as one who 'had all the manly traditions and honourable associations that gather round the best youth at Eton and Trinity', Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, treated him with little consideration In fact, the autocrat of the India Office desired that the head of the Indian Government should be a man of mediocre mental equipment so that he could be used as a pliable instrument with impunity 'The Indian Viceroy', Morley wrote, 'is not bound to know political philosophy or juristic theory or constitutional history; he is first and foremost an administrator, and the working head of a complicated civil and military service'[1] Having served as Governor-General of Canada, Minto presumably had the minimum qualifications prescribed for an Indian Viceroy by his superior. He was, however, conscious of his own inferiority to his predecessor and took comfort from the knowledge that 'many a race has been won by giving the horse a rest in his gallops'.

As a loyal member of his class, Minto sincerely believed in the greatness and glory of his country and in the permanence of the British empire. He detested Gladstone's liberalism and 'literally shrieked' over the great Victorian statesman. 'I would not,' he wrote from Canada, 'have

[1]Morley John Viscount, *RECOLLECTIONS,* Vol II, Macmillan. 1917, pp 151-152

thought any one could have disgraced his country as Gladstone has done.'[2] When he arrived in India, he saw that Curzon's impudence and imprudence, combined with the obduracy of Whitehall, had plunged the country into deep discontent. Moderate politicians like Gokhale, Phirozeshah Mehta and Surendranath Banerjea, who looked upon British rule in India with almost filial piety, were being gradually forced out of their position by younger men who deeply resented the political and economic subordination of their country and the overbearing attitude of their foreign rulers. Minto decided to meet this challenge by releasing and strengthening the forces of reaction so that Indian nationalism could never again flow along the natural channels to its destined goal. He derided Morley's notions about the value of reforms as the saviour of the British Raj by declaring: 'The Raj will not disappear in India as long as the British race remains what it is, because we shall fight for the Raj as hard as we have ever fought if it comes to fighting, and we shall win as we have always done'.[3] He dismissed the plea for self-government as idle prattle 'Of course,' he told Morley in May 1909, 'Swaraj is an impossibility in our time, and for generations'. He need not, however, have been so emphatic in communicating his political beliefs to Morley who, as we shall see presently, was himself as good an imperialist as any other.

John Morley's liberalism, so far as it concerned India, was skin-deep. He was a no-changer and a despot and shared Minto's revulsion for self government to subject peoples. Liberalism and autocracy make strange bedfellows, but Morley, by the brilliance of his intellect, attempted to make them lie together. Many of his contemporaries and friends have recorded their views on him and, as an explanation of the complexity of the Indian constitutional problem under British rule, it will be most rewarding to recall those of the more important among them. Lady Minto, who had the best opportunity of watching the harassment of her husband by Morley, com-

[2]Buchan John, *LORD MINTO. A MEMOIR,* Nelson, 1924, p.72
[3]Ibid, pp 277, 278

plained that as time went on the Secretary of State 'became more autocratic and exacting'.[4] *Cambridge History* quotes General J. H. Morgan as saying that no more autocratic Secretary for India ever reigned at Whitehall, none ever consulted his Council less, and none ever admonished a Viceroy more.[5] Kitchener held strong views about Morley whom he described as 'pig-headed and dangerous'.[6] Churchill in his *Great Contemporaries* writes: "At the India Office he (Morley) was an autocrat and almost a martinet. After several years, he shaped the first modest proposals for Indian representative government, now known as the 'Morley-Minto reforms'. He, the ardent apostle of Irish self-government, felt no sense of contradiction in declaring his hostility to anything like 'Home Rule for India.'"[7] Well could Morley exclaim: *Et tu Brute*! Curzon, himself no mean autocrat, wrote: 'Lord Morley combined with an austere but flexible radicalism and an irresistible personal charm, the most despotic of tempers, and was an impassioned apostle of personal rule. He was apt in Parliament to speak of himself and the Viceroy as though the Government of India was conducted by a sort of private arrangement between these great Twin Brethren, upon whom no sort of check ought to be placed by irresponsible and incompetent outsiders.'[8]

The combination between Morley and Minto was superb. It is indeed impossible to conceive of a pair of men more resourceful and determined than these two in frustrating and diverting India's aspirations into dangerously wrong directions. The Secretary of State could never be convinced that Western political institutions would be suitable to India and expressed his complete accord with the Viceroy that their adoption was neither desirable nor

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4Lady Minto, *INDIA, MINTO AND MORLEY,* Macmillan 1934, p.3.

5*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA,* Vol VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p 217.

6Magnus Sir Philip, *KITCHENER,* John Murray, 1958, p 232

7Churchill Winston S, *GREAT CONTEMPORARIES,* Collins, Fontana Books, 1959, p 82.

8Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN INDIA,* Vol II, Cassell, p 117.

possible, nor even conceivable. He sagely added: 'Assuredly not in your day or mine.'[9] He maintained that India's position was unique and that the analogies of Canada and Ireland were misleading as an argument for granting freedom to this country. He derided the idea that 'whatever is good in the way of self-government for Canada must be good for India' as a 'gross and dangerous sophism'. It was like arguing, he said, that because a fur coat was necessary in the Canadian winter, it was also needed in the Deccan. He assured the champions of the *status quo* that the reforms of 1909 were not intended to meet Indian aspirations for self-rule. 'If it could be said,' he declared, 'that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it'[10] The tenor of the argument was clear. India would never be fit to receive the blessing of national independence.

With the consent of Morley, the Viceroy set about strengthening the defences of British rule in India by seeking to isolate and weaken the Congress, despite the fact that the national organisation was still steadfastly moderate in its demands and temperate in its agitation for their fulfilment. Gokhale was the very embodiment of gentleness, realism and sagacity and in his many meetings with Morley had merely pleaded for a small measure of political concessions, agreeing with the British point of view that complete independence for his country was a distant goal, not to be realised within his life time. He was opposed to violence and unconstitutional methods and declared that, with its 'enormous reserve of power', the Government would have little difficulty in 'throttling' the Congress to death, should it deviate from constitutional agitation.[11] And yet this great Indian, who inspired many young men, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan,

[9]Morley John Viscount, *RECOLLECTIONS*, Vol. II, Macmillan 1917, pp 172-173.

[10]Coupland Sir Reginald, *THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM IN INDIA*, Oxford University Press 1944, Part I, p. 26.

[11]Andrews C F and Mukerji Girija, *THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE CONGRESS*, G Allen & Unwin, 1938, p 215.

with a genuine spirit of service to their motherland, was looked upon with suspicion by the Viceroy. In less than two years of his coming to India, Minto emphatically declared that he was 'thoroughly disappointed in Gokhale'. 'I had liked,' he wrote to Morley on August 7, 1907, 'what I had seen of him and believed he was honest at heart, but the part he has played of late has disgusted me. As an honest moderate he has lost a great opportunity of discountenancing rank sedition, and what you tell me of his references to your speech shows either that he is incapable of understanding the real friends of India, or that he is, as you say, as big a revolutionist as Lajpat[12] and the rest of them. It is very disappointing.'[13] Minto's outburst is understandable. He underestimated the character, the calibre and the stature of Gokhale and believed that he could readily enlist the Indian leader's support to his Government's unbridled policy of coercion, namely, deportation and imprisonment without trial, suppression of meetings, police reports and similar methods of repression. Gokhale was too proud and patriotic to lend countenance to measures designed to degrade and demoralize his countrymen.

But Minto was never hardpressed for allies. By a dexterous use of power and persuasion, he could win over an entire class and a community, both of whom could be a tower of strength to him and his successors in tying a crushingly heavy millstone round the neck of Indian nationalism. The great Princely Order, with its vested interests and its warped disposition towards its country and its people, was most willing to contribute to the consolidation of British rule in India. The response of the princes to the Viceroy's solicitations for assistance in putting down 'sedition,' was truly heart-warming. They produced a 'splendid manifesto of loyalty' and promised Minto vigorous cooperation 'in whatever policy of repression the Govern-

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[12]Lala Lajpat Rai, a respected national leader, about whom more will be heard later

[13]Lady Minto, *INDIA, MINTO AND MORLEY*, Macmillan, 1934 p 150.

ment of India proposed'.[14] Minto was prompt in reversing the dictatorial policy of his predecessor, whose obsession with thoroughness and efficiency had driven many a prince to despair. 'I have,' he declared 'always been opposed to anything like pressure on Darbars with a view to introducing British methods of administration.' He in fact made it a rule 'to avoid as far as possible the issue of general instructions' to the princes.

Naturally inclined to sycophancy, the generality of the princes became profoundly grateful to the Viceroy for his unbounded generosity to them. It is unpleasant to recall episodes of human degradation, but since debasement was encouraged as virtue to thwart the country's progress, it needs thorough ventilation if only to bring into proper perspective how immense were India's difficulties in gaining her freedom. Sir Pertab Singh was a shining light of the princely fraternity. There was a certain originality in the style of his speech and in his ideas and ideals. Sir Pertab, who was once staying with the Mintos with a young prince, admonished the boy in these inspiring words: 'If you going Eton, although you being Prince, you staying downstairs blacking Sahibs' boots; this being good teaching for you.'[15] The rulers of Nabha belonged to the martial race of Sikhs. During the visit of the Viceroy and his family to the state of Nabha, the Maharaja addressed the younger son of Minto thus: 'Your father is kind to the Phulkian misl (confederation), because God, the Immortal, has caused the noble spirit of his ancestor, who saved their forefathers, to pass into him. You must never forget this, and must be kind to my grandchildren as your father is to me. My sword is yours.'[16] What a noble legacy to his descendants! We may cite one more unedifying example like his The Begam of Bhopal, as we have seen earlier, was a smart lady who refused to acknowledge that she was an Indian. Hearing that Her Highness had become a little sore about

[14]Buchan John, *LORD MINTO: A MEMOIR*, Nelson, 1924, p 300.
[15]Lady Minto, *INDIA, MINTO AND MORLEY*, Macmillan 1934, p 409.
[16]Buchan John, *LORD MINTO: A MEMOIR*, Nelson, 1924, p.246.

certain trivial matters, Minto wrote to her. The Begam was delighted when she received the letter which 'she at once pronounced to be so charming that she fired off a salute of twenty one guns!' Morley, to whom the episode was reported, was highly diverted. 'Your story of the Begam of Bhopal,' he wrote, 'gave me as hearty a laugh as I have had for many a day. She must be a trump!'[17]

It was a great disappointment in Minto's life that his proposal for the creation of a 'Council of Princes' as a counter-poise to Congress aims did not materialise during his term of office. Morley was doubtful about its value and wondered what subjects the Council could possibly discuss. He was emphatically averse to sharing the secrets of government even with this trusted and exalted fraternity. 'In your foreign Department,' he wrote, 'they would be sure to try for a finger in the pie.' The comradeship that was forged between the princes and their paramount power amidst difficulties and dangers has been admirably summed up by a well-known authority whose observations deserve to be quoted in full. It says: 'Assailed by the intelligentsia, the Government looked round naturally for allies and helpers In 1857, the princes had in general aided to resist the tide of the Mutiny. In 1907 they might aid to slacken the onslaught of political unrest. They were, therefore, to be cultivated rather than coerced. Seeing their rising value, the princes raised their demands, but not too much, for they also were threatened by the same forces that the Government of India was seeking to dam back into constitutional channels. A new tendency had come into operation.'[18]

A political system, based upon such unashamed selfishness and opportunism, could not be expected to survive the tide of national independence. In the crowded earthly pantheon of the Indian princely order, there were a few—but only a few—rulers who felt humiliated by the utter sterility and the anti-national character of their functions,

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[17]Lady Minto, *INDIA, MINTO AND MORLEY*, Macmillan, 1934 pp.70, 71, 72

[18]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, pp.506-507.

especially in relation to their overlords, and inwardly prayed for the destruction of the iniquitous system. Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda, was the most eminent among the few really competent and self-respecting princes. Confiding his political views to the late Aga Khan, the Gaekwar declared with rare prophetic insight: 'British rule in India will never be ended merely by the struggle of the Indian people. But world conditions are bound to change so fundamentally that nothing will then be able to prevent its total disappearance.' With the same forthrightness, he believed in the necessity for the complete destruction of princely states. He said: 'The first thing you'll have to do when the English are gone, is to get rid of all these rubbishy States. I tell you, there'll never be an Indian nation until this so-called Princely Order disappears. Its disappearance will be the best thing that can happen to India—the best possible thing.'[19] It is unfortunate that this great and patriotic prince did not live to see the fulfilment of his noble desire through Sardar Patel's historic work of integration and absorption.

Perhaps, even more significant than his overtures to the princes was Minto's resounding success in dissuading the Muslim aristocracy and intelligentsia from joining the 'seditious ranks' of the Congress. The prayer of the Muslim deputation that waited on the Viceroy at Simla on October 1, 1906 that its community should be treated as a separate and historically important element in India's population without regard to its numerical strength, and the readiness with which its request was granted, were fraught with grave consequences to the country's future. Indeed, on that fateful day, India's political life was irrevocably mortgaged to separatism, sectionalism and obscurantism It would, however, be historically untrue to say that what is known as the 'communal' problem was deliberately created by the British There was a pre-existing disunity between the two great communities, which the British Government, far from seeking to compose, delibe-

[19]*THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN*, Simon & Schuster 1954, pp 301-302.

rately widened with the one and clear object of insuring its own permanence in India. Its efforts to prevent them from coming together were crowned with complete success, although they failed to purchase for it immunity from effective challenge by the forces of nationalism.

The problem of Hindu-Muslim relations is a widely-discussed one, but certain facts deserve to be brought into proper perspective. Islam came to India over a thousand years ago — young, vital, and impatient to embrace the entire country. Inevitably, it had acquired all the austere qualities of the desert country in which it was born and sought to transplant the religious, social and cultural traditions obtaining in Arabia in the land of its conquest, famous for its mighty Himalayan ranges, its broad and life-sustaining rivers and its rich lands and forests. The civilization of the Hindus, which faithfully mirrored the variety and the picturesqueness of the country, was exuberant, complex and ornate. Nevertheless, as we have seen earlier, its capacity for the the absorption of alien cultures and races was remarkable. The Greeks, the Huns, the Scythians and a host of other foreigners poured into the country down the corridor of time and dissolved their separate entity in the vast cauldron of India's national life. But at the time of Muslim invasion, the Hindu society was in a state of near collapse. Its great powers of resilience and its inner strength and cohesion had been gravely impaired so that the impact of Islam upon it was as powerful and destructive as a cataclysm. The sword, the power of patronage and the insensate tyranny of caste that weighed heavily upon the masses, served as a powerful incentive for large-scale defections from the Hindu fold. But the vastness of the country, the tenacious adherence of the people to their ancestral faith, and the collapse of the Muslim power under the hammer-blows of the Marathas, the Sikhs and the British, rendered it impossible for the invading faith to establish its ascendancy over the entire country The part could not obviously swallow up the whole.

The downfall of the Muslim power hastened the degeneration of its ruling class whose hostility to all change

drove it to cherish its pride and poverty in isolation. It became blindly conservative and pronounced anathema on everything that had no sanction in the scriptures of its faith. No school could be called by that name unless it taught the Koran. The attachment of the Hindus to their own ancient lore was no less passionate, but they did not keep themselves away from the new founts of knowledge and enlightenment. Long before Sir Syed Ahmad Khan launched his crusade among his co-religionists on behalf of modern education, Hindu stalwarts like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee gave a bold and statesmanlike lead to their community by proclaiming that the realm of knowledge knew no racial or geographical frontiers and that it was a supreme attribute of wisdom to acquire enlightenment from every source. They struck remorseless blows at Hindu superstition and became the vanguards of far-reaching social reforms. An unbroken and a steadily-widening tradition was created to offer an effective challenge to the *status quo* and obscurantism. We find in later years, Swami Vivekananda strongly condemning meaningless metaphysical discussions and disputations about empty ceremonials. He derided the Hindus by saying: "Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is in the cooking-pot, and our religion is 'don't touch me, I am holy'."[20] The walls of orthodoxy and reaction fell under such persistent attacks and the resulting renaissance threw up a class of keen and purposeful men who won the liberation of their minds by taking enthusiastically to the Western system of education. It was this class which eventually became the inspirer of nationalism in the country.

The picture presented by contemporary Muslim community was hardly inspiring. Apart from its natural antipathy to Western learning, it lay under the shadow of British suspicion and hostility. The belief that the Muslims were the prime-movers in the Mutiny of 1857 was as untenable as the assumption that it was from them that

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[20]Nehru Jawaharlal, *THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA*, Signet Press, 1946, p.401.

political power was wrested by the British. The futile and ill-organised uprising was the work of both Hindus and Muslims. Again, long before the British made a bid for dominion in India, the *coup de grace* had been delivered to Muslim authority by its enemies, leaving only a few effete principalities, such as Hyderabad, Oudh and Bengal, which were in constant fear of being overthrown by their more virile neighbours. But, however untrue historically, the belief persisted that the Muslim was the real enemy of British rule in India. For instance, Dr. Hunter wrote: 'The Mussulmans of India are, and have been for many years, a source of chronic danger to the British power in India.' An inevitable consequence of such a misconception was that the community was given the treatment of an outlaw. Rightly did Syed Ahmad Khan lament: 'I find the most bitter denunciations against the Mohammedans, who are freely represented as being everything that is vile, treacherous, and contemptible. There was no prickly thorn in those awful times respecting which it was not said that it was planted by a Mohammedan! There was no fiery whirlwind that was not raised by a Mohammedan!'[21]

Syed Ahmad Khan was a patriot and sincerely believed in the historic destiny of the two great communities that inhabit the country. He had a great admiration for Bengali intellect, drive and patriotism and it became the governing passion of his life to lift his co-religionists from the slough of despond and backwardness by convincing them of the value and advantages of modern education. He had grown old when he undertook the great task of Muslim regeneration and was sixty when the Muslim College at Aligarh was established in 1877. One of the declared aims of the College, which developed into the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920, was 'to make the Mussalmans of

[21]Graham Lieutenant-Colonel, G. F. *THE LIFE AND WORK OF SYED AHMED KHAN* ckwood, 1885, p.60.

India worthy and useful subjects of the British Crown.'[22] The ageing patriot was convinced by the British principals and staff of the College that it should be the single-minded aim of the Muslims to win British approval by active loyalty to the Raj so that they might not be hopelessly outstripped in the race for official favours. He was persuaded to believe that representative and responsible government in India would inevitably lead to the imposition of the tyranny of the Hindu majority over the Muslims. Syed Ahmad Khan had grown too old to realise that there was no inherent conflict between Muslim advancement and the growth of nationalism in the country and that it was in the best interests of both that there should be no sharp disparity in the progress of the two communities. A man, who had all the prestige and the equipment of a national leader like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, thus gradually withdrew himself from the broad arena and became an ardent champion of separatism. His movement was thus 'inspired by the thought that the Muslims of India were a separate people or nation who must not be absorbed within Hinduism, and that the essence of Islam was consistent with the best that the West had to offer'.[23] His contribution to India's political life has been summed up by Professor Coupland who says: The Moslem recoil from Congress nationalism was mainly Ahmad's doing.'[24]

It would, however, be extremely unfair to deny the British principals and the personnel of the Aligarh College the credit for achieving these valuable results for British rule. They were in fact indefatigable workers in the cause of India's disunity. Sir Theodore Beck, the first principal

[22]About the Aligarh Muslim University, the Aga Khan wrote. "We may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of no outside benevolence; and surely it may also be claimed that the independent, sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh". (*The Memoirs of Aga Khan,* page 36). The University continues to flourish in divided India.

[23]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA,* Oxford University Press, 1958, p.804

[24]Coupland Sir Reginald, *INDIA: A RE-STATEMENT,* Oxford University Press, 1945, p.92.

of the Muslim College, was the high priest of British imperialism and he, like many bureaucrats, asked why the Hindus and Muslims desired to unite if it were not to drive away the British from India. He got up a mammoth memorial on behalf of the Muslims protesting against Charles Bradlaugh's Bill of 1889 seeking to introduce democratic institutions in India. In December 1893, an organisation was set up to gain patently anti-national and sectional objectives. Some of the aims of this body were to strive for the strengthening of British rule in India, to promote the feeling of loyalty to the Raj among the people and to prevent the Muslims from participating in all patriotic movements.[25] "It is imperative,' wrote Sir Theodore Beck, 'for the Muslims and the British to unite with a view to fighting these agitators and prevent the introduction of democratic form of government, unsuited as it is to the needs and genius of the country. We, therefore, advocate loyalty to the government and Anglo-Muslim collaboration '[26] One cannot withhold one's admiration from Beck for his confident claim about the unsuitability of democratic institutions for India long before they were introduced in the country. Indians were presumably required to become expert swimmers even before entering the water!

Beck's successors were no less resourceful and enterprising in championing Muslim separatism. Archbold worked for it with missionary zeal, the time being most opportune for his activities. The question of granting constitutional reforms was under consideration and Archbold believed that a Muslim deputation to the Viceroy pleading for special concessions would offer them the best means of securing their interests. He told a Muslim leader that the Viceroy had agreed to meet the deputation and made many helpful suggestions about the contents of the memorial. 'I would here suggest,' he wrote, 'that we begin with a solemn expression of loyalty. The Government's decision

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[25]Mehta Asoka and Patwardhan Achyut, *THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE IN INDIA*, Kitabistan, 1942, p.59.

[26]Ibid, p 60.

to take a step in the direction of self-government should be appreciated. But our apprehension should be expressed that the principle of election, if introduced, would prove detrimental to the interests of the Muslim miniority. It should be respectfully suggested that nomination or representation by religion be introduced to meet Muslim opinion. We should also say that in a country like India due weight must be given to the views of the zamindars.' Archbold generously offered to draft the address himself or revise it.[27] Who actually drafted the petition is of no great importance, but the fact that an educationist, whose task it was to train his wards as enlightened and patriotic citizens, should have shown such initiative to corrupt the founts of India's political life, is not devoid of its irony.

The Muslim deputation, which waited on Minto on October 1, 1906, was led by the Aga Khan, that astonishing personage who could play a plethora of mutually conflicting parts with consummate ease. The deputationists declared that representative institutions of the Western type were totally unsuited to Indian conditions and that if the Government, in its wisdom, decided to introduce them, the Muslims should be given separate representation 'commensurate not merely with their numerical strength but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they made to the defence of the Empire'. Minto was least concerned with the justice of the demand or the tenability of the arguments advanced in its support. He assured the petitioners that he fully shared their views about the absolute impracticability of adopting democratic methods of government in India and about the fate that would overtake them if introduced. 'The pith of your address,' the Viceroy declared, 'as I understand it, is a claim that, in any system of representation, whether it affects a municipality, a district board, or a legislative council, in which it is proposed to introduce or to increase the electoral organisation, the Mohammedan community

[27]Mehta Asoka and Patwardhan Achyut, *THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE IN INDIA*, Kitabistan, 1942, p.62.

should be represented as a body. You justly claim that your position should be estimated not merely on your numerical strength but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service that it has rendered to the Empire. I am entirely in accord with you'. He added, with uncompromising finality, that 'any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this continent'.[28]

The thesis of the petitioners and their patron was twofold, namely, that the Muslims deserved preferential treatment by virtue of their 'historical importance' and at the same time protection by means of credal representation, as any other system would be dangerous to their interests in a country where democratic principles would never operate effectively or equitably. Having read what Hunter, Ahmad Khan and a host of others have said about the treatment that had been accorded to the Muslims by the British, their sudden elevation to superior status by Minto can only be construed as the outcome of a curious mixture of cynicism and hypocrisy. Nor can any truth be discovered in the statement that joint electorates would have ended in failure even before they were given an honest trial.

The news about the Muslim deputation and the Viceroy's reply to its address gave immense joy to the Anglo-Indians. Lady Minto recorded in her diary: "This has been a very eventful day: as some one said to me, 'an epoch in Indian history'."[29] She received an even more explicit letter which characterised the episode as 'nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two-millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition' His Highness the Aga Khan, who led the deputation, declares in his Memoirs: 'Lord Minto's acceptance of our demands was the foundation of all future constitutional proposals made for India

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[28]Buchan John, *LORD MINTO· A MEMOIR*, Nelson, 1924, p.244.
[29]Lady Minto, *INDIA, MINTO AND MORLEY*, Macmillan, 1934, p 45.

by successive British Governments, and its final, inevitable consequence was the partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan.'[30] In the light of this testimony—and more will be stated soon about His Highness himself—any attempt to defend the deputationists and the Viceroy would be singularly futile.

Wise and impartial men looked upon October 1 as an evil day for India. Prof. Coupland was no particular friend of Indian nationalism and even he felt constrained to make the tardy admission that 'the creation of communal electorates was a flagrant breach of democratic principles'. In no country, whose rulers are sincerely devoted to the welfare of their people, is representation by religion countenanced. It is in fact dreaded and shunned as a sinister instrument of division and disruption and as the enemy of harmony and inter-dependence. The Special Commission on the Ceylon Constitution, 1928, points out that communal representation was devised in order to assist the growth of democracy in countries inhabited by composite populations. The experiment, the Commission says, 'has not given the desired results, but has had, if anything, the opposite effect'.[31] The Hilton Young Report on Kenya has also arrived at the same conclusion. It says: 'The communal system where it has been tried has tended to accentuate differences and prevent the growth of a healthy political life.'[32] How this observation has come true in India will be explained in the following pages.

Communalism in India was never caught napping. Aware of the Government's unstinted support and patronage, it became active, assertive, combative and uncompromising. It felt the need for a party and brought into existence the Muslim League on December 30, 1906. The ideas and ideals that animated the new party and the National Congress

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[30] *THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN*, Simon & Schuster 1954, p.94.

[31] *REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON THE CEYLON CONSTITUTION*, 1928, pp 90, 91.

[32] Krishna Dr. K. B., *THE PROBLEM OF MINORITIES*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1939, p. 253.

are worthy of study. The aim of the Muslim League was to 'promote among Indian Moslems feelings of loyalty towards the British Government....to protect the political and other rights of the Indian Moslems and to place their needs and aspirations before the Government in temperate language'. Subject to the fulfilment of these objectives, the League would endeavour to 'promote friendly feelings between Moslems and other communities of India'.[33] Adopting a new constitution in 1908, the Congress declared that the goal of the Indian people was the attainment of a 'system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members'. The declared objective would be striven for by 'constitutional means' and by 'promoting national unity, fostering public spirit and developing and organising the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country'.

The contrast between the hopes and aspirations of the two parties that were destined to play a crucial role in deciding the country's future is obvious. It is perfectly understandable that Britain, which found the Muslim League's attitude towards constitutional progress in complete accord with her own intentions towards this country, whole-heartedly made common cause with the forces of separatism. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal, was a ruthless bureaucrat. He regarded the agitation for the annulment of Bengal's partition and the *swadeshi* movement as an intolerable affront to the prestige of the Raj. He openly threatened that bloodshed might be necessary if the Congress vigorously pursued the boycott agitation. Gurkha troops were brought down and stationed in East Bengal to intimidate the civilian population.[34] Fuller openly practised the doctrine of

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[33]Mehta Asoka and Patwardhan Achyut, *THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE IN INDIA*, Kitabistan, 1942, p 28.

[34]Andrews C. F. and Mukerji Girija, *THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE CONGRESS*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1938, p.205.

divide and rule by proclaiming that, of his two wives the Muslim was the favourite! A foreign observer, Nevinson, records that under Fuller's regime 'a large proportion of Government posts were set aside for Mohammedans, and some were even kept vacant because there was no Mohammedan qualified to fill them'. A reign of terror was imposed on the Hindus and 'when Mohammedans rioted, punitive police ransacked Hindu houses, and companies of little Gurkhas were quartered on Hindu populations..' The author goes on to say that the Muslims 'genuinely believed that the British authorities were ready to forgive them all excesses'.[35]

Despite the destructive potency of communal representation in driving a permanent wedge between the Hindus and Muslims, no attempt was made to abolish it. On the contrary, every opportunity was eagerly grasped to widen its scope so that the scramble for preferential treatment and reservation of seats in the legislatures became a normal feature at the time of every enquiry relating to constitutional reforms. Both Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, in his diary and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, which led to the framing of the Act of 1919, declared in the most categorical terms that any system of communal electorates was 'a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principles'[36] and yet they deliberately extended the area of the mischief by granting separate franchise to the Sikhs. The Congress, which had consistently fought for joint electorates, eventually abandoned its stand in the hope of promoting Hindu-Muslim concord by doing so. The agreement of December 1916, known as the Lucknow Pact, arrived at between the Congress and the League, secured for sectional representation the *imprimatur* of the nationalists, thus rendering all future agitation against it futile. In spite of the Congress' compromise

[35]Singh Gurmukh Nihal, *LANDMARKS IN INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*, India Book Shop, Benares, 1933, p 319

[36]*REPORT ON INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS (MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REPORT)*, 1918, p 149.

with a fundamental principle, it could not be assumed that the Muslim supporters of the Pact 'had conquered their distrust of the representative principle.' Indeed, concessions merely led to more concessions, for it became obvious to the communalists that no limit need be set to their separatist ambitions so long as the British Government was anxious to placate them.

Mahatma Gandhi, to whom Hindu-Muslim unity was a cardinal principle in his political philosophy, made Himalayan efforts to realise his goal, but only met with disastrous failure. He took the lead in the Khilafat movement which began in October 1919, claiming that it gave 'such an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muhammedans as would not arise in a hundred years'.' The Muslim intelligentsia, whose memories, to quote Professor Coupland, 'were more concerned with Islam than with India', were delighted at Gandhi's enthusiasm for a cause which had no manner of concern with this country but which, on the basis of the untenable belief that all Muslims were one, they had made their own.[37] Jinnah looked upon the whole proceedings with profound distaste and declined to join the agitation on the valid ground that Indian Muslims owed loyalty to none outside their own country.[38] The unsubstantial character of the Indian movement over a discredited issue was soon proved. The rise of Kemal Ataturk and the establishment of a 'strong, self-confident and secular Turkish Republic nullified the whole basis of the pan-Islamic crusade in India'. The Ali brothers—Maulanas Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali—Gandhi's most influential followers during the Khilafat agitation, found no more use for his leadership Mohamed Ali, who, in 1923, had paid a glowing tribute to the Mahatma, saw no inconsistency in declaring in the following year: 'However pure Mr. Gandhi's character may be, he must appear to me from the point of view of religion inferior to

[37]This subject will be discussed at some length in the next chapter.

[38]Ambedkar Dr. B R, *PAKISTAN OR THE PARTITION OF INDIA,* Thacker, 1946, p 312.

any Musalman even though he be without character.'[39] He declared at the Indian Round Table Conference: 'I belong to two circles of equal size but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world....We are not nationalists but supernationalists.' This is only a specimen of the irresponsible utterances of front-rank Muslim leaders[40] and vividly illustrates the nature of the obstacles that stood in the way of communal harmony.

Neither Gandhi nor the Congress need, however, have broken their heads and hearts over Hindu-Muslim untiy, realising as both did that the goal could never be reached so long as there was a third party to defeat their attempts. National unity became a saleable-commodity in the hands of the separatists and the Congress made repeated but vain bids to possess it by conceding the continually rising Muslim demands. It failed to realise that the Government would be the last and the only successful bidder. Indeed, the real source of communal discord lay in the determined refusal of the British to transfer power to Indians who were deliberately set on the wild goose chase of national unity as a means of side-tracking the basic issue. Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India (1924-28), made this point perfectly clear when he wrote in January 1925: 'The more it is made obvious that these antagonisms are profound, and affect immense and irreconcilable sections of the population, the more conspicuously is the fact illustrated that we, and we alone, can play the part of composers.'[41] A year earlier, he had declared to Lord Reading, the Viceroy: 'To me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit

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[39] Ambedkar Dr. B. R, *PAKISTAN OR THE PARTITION OF INDIA,* Thacker, 1946, p.296.

[40] The curious may refer to Dr. Ambedkar's well-documented book on Pakistan in which he gives numerous examples of Muslim bellicosity. A few of these leaders remained in the Congress fold till the end, fully sharing the rewards of national independence. His reference to the utterances of some of the Hindu leaders may also be read with interest.

[41] *FREDERICK EDWIN EARL OF BIRKENHEAD: THE LAST PHASE,* By his son, The Earl of Birkenhead, Vol. II, T. Butterworth, 1935, pp.245, 246.

for Dominion self-government'[42] Mortified by the almost unanimous disapproval of the Simon Commission and the cold reception accorded to it during its tour of the country, the Secretary of State in the last year of his office advised the Viceroy to terrify the Hindus by rousing their apprehension that the Commission would be got hold of by Muslims. Such a strategy would make it possible for the Commission to secure 'a solid Moslem support, leaving Jinnah high and dry.'[43]

But Jinnah could not be brushed aside in such a casual manner. He wielded some influence in the country and was esteemed for his integrity and independence. He was, however, an untiring champion of his own community and saw no conflict between the wider and abiding interests of the country and the mounting sectional demands of his co-religionists, although he himself, as Dr. Ambedkar, rather inelegantly says, was no better than a 'statutory Muslim'. The more important among Jinnah's Fourteen Points may be recalled here. The constitution of India should be federal, with its constituents exercising the same measure of internal autonomy; residuary powers should be vested, not in the principal government of the country, but in its units, the minorities should be granted adequate representation in all the legislatures and other elected bodies, taking care at the same time that the position of the majority community was not affected in any province; Muslims should be given not less than one-third of the seats in the Central legislature, representation by communities should be continued until it was abrogated by common consent; the Muslim majorities in the provinces of the North-West Frontier, Punjab and Bengal should not be disturbed on any account; no measure should be undertaken in any legislature if three-fourths of the members of the

[42] *FREDERICK EDWIN EARL OF BIRKENHEAD. THE LAST PHASE,* By his son, The Earl of Birkenhead, Vol. II, T. Butterworth, 1935, p 245

[43] Ibid, p. 255.

community concerned were opposed to it; Sind should be separated from the Presidency of Bombay, while the N. W. Frontier Province should be elevated to the status of a full-fledged Governor's Province; Muslims should be given an adequate share in the services and no cabinet should be formed at the Centre or in the provinces unless at least one-third the number of its members were Muslims.

These were extraordinary demands. Not only the non-Muslims, but no less a body than the Simon Commission objected to them. The Commission conceded that 'in view of the existing position and of the weakness of the Moslem minority in six out of the eight provinces, the present scale of weightage in favour of Muhammedans in those provinces might properly be retained'. But, the Commission added, 'it would be unfair that Muhammedans should retain the very considerable weightage they now enjoy in the six provinces, and that there should at the same time be imposed, in face of Hindu and Sikh opposition, a definite Muslim majority in the Punjab and Bengal unalterable by any appeal to the electorate.'[44] The Motilal Nehru Committee, 1928, generously conceded most of the Muslim demands except that relating to separate electorates The only methods, the Committee observed, of giving a feeling of security to the minorities were to grant them safeguards and cultural autonomy. It suggested the reservation of seats in replacement of separate electorates and urged that the concession should be confined only to Muslims. But the All-India Muslim Conference, which met on January 1, 1929 under the chairmanship of the Aga Khan, rejected the Nehru Report on two main grounds, namely, that the Muslims were not prepared to abandon the rights of representation secured by them under the Act of 1919 and that the frame of the Indian Constitution should be federal and not unitary on any account. Jinnah made common cause with his community in turning down the Nehru Report, although

[44]*REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION* (Simon Commission), Vol. II, 1930, p.71.

it conceded almost everything demanded in his Fourteen Points.[45]

His Highness the Aga Khan played an extremely varied role in his public life. On many crucial occasions when the future of India was under consideration, he was present like fate. His Highness was a prince without a principality, but his spiritual dominion over the opulent Ismaili sect was as absolute as the autocracy of an independent sovereign. The Aga Khan had many influential friends among the Hindus, but his attitude towards their community lacked the warmth of fellow-feeling. He proudly records that he was 'personally responsible for the conversion to Islam of some 30,000 to 40,000 caste Hindus'[46]—an act of mercy, he claims, that saved the emancipated persons from the holocaust that accompanied the partition of India! As pointed out earlier, he was the leader of the Muslim delegation that waited on Minto and thus won distinction as a star performer in what Maulana Mohamed Ali described as a 'command performance'. He was elected the Muslim League's first President and held that office till 1912. He made a powerful contribution to the nullification of the Nehru Report and in many other ways tried to prevent Indian nationalism from forcing the issue of *Swaraj* with the British rulers.

A grateful government showered praises and honours on His Highness. The insignia of "royalty" was granted to him in April 1916 entitling him to a salute of eleven guns and the rank and precedence of a first-class ruling prince of the Bombay Presidency. Writing in eulogistic terms about his elevation, *The Times* declared: 'It has fallen to the Aga Khan to serve in vastly wider fields than Sir Salar Jung and to exert much more than local or provincial in-

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45 Nevertheless, on June 19, 1929 Jinnah wrote like a true patriot protesting to the British Prime Minister against the policy of his Government towards Indian aspirations and stating in the most definite terms that India had 'lost her faith in the word of Great Britain '. (*Mohammed Ali Jinnah* By M. H. Saiyid, page 453)

46 *THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN*, Simon & Schuster 1954, pp.4, 5.

fluence in a crisis of British rule even greater than that of the mutiny.'[47] The Aga Khan led the Muslim team at the Indian Round Table Conference in London. He managed to promote complete accord between the Muslim delegates and the European group in thwarting the demand for the transfer of power. In a confidential circular, Sir Edward Benthall, commercial representative of British interests in India at the Conference, wrote in enthusiastic terms about Muslim collaboration with the opponents of Indian freedom. No apology is needed for quoting rather copiously from the document: 'If you look at the result of this last session, you will see that Gandhi and the (Indian) Federated Chambers are unable to point to a single concession wrung from the British Government as the result of their visit to St. James' Palace. He landed in India with empty hands.. The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team: Ali Imam, the Nationalist Muslim, caused no division. They played their cards with great skill throughout; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return, they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal....After the general elections, the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Conference and to fight the Congress. The Muslims, who do not want responsibility at the Centre, were delighted....We had made up our minds that the fight with the Congress was inevitable; we felt and said that the sooner it came the better, but we made up our minds that for a crushing success we should have all possible friends on our side. The Muslims were alright; the Minorities Pact and Government's general attitude ensured that. So were the Princes and the Minorities.... The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us.' With a wonderful candour, Benthall concludes: 'It must not, however, be supposed that when we agree that Reforms are necessary, we advocate

[47]*THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN*, Simon & Schuster 1954, p.142.

democratic reform in every Province. All that we mean is such change in the system of government as will improve its efficiency.'[48] One wonders whether it was at all necessary for Indians to make so many pilgrimages to London to secure such a pitiful concession. Edward Thompson confirms that the proceedings of the Conference were marked by a good deal of backdoor manoeuvres and makes the confident assertion that the British in fact practised the pestilential doctrine of *divide et impera* in India[49]

The historian of the Congress, who has reproduced Benthall's confidential circular in his book, writes thus about the Aga Khan: 'The recent revelations in the Legislative Assembly about the demand of H. H. The Aga Khan to be made a Ruling Prince of some territory in India, as a reward for his services at the R.T.C., throw much lurid light on these transactions.'[50] And yet His Highness, whose contribution to Indian politics was anything but constructive, adroitly foisted the blame for India's misfortunes on the unhappy Hindus! It is earnestly to be hoped that when the history of Pakistan comes to be written, the Aga Khan will not be denied his place in the galaxy of the men that made it.

Thus, all attempts to promote communal concord in India steadily dissolved into a chimera. A determined bid made in November 1932 to accommodate Muslim claims was foiled by Sir Samuel Hoare (later Lord Templewood), Secretary of State for India, who offered far more 'liberal' terms to the Muslims than they had agreed to accept at the Unity Conference. In the same year, the North-West Frontier Province was upgraded to the status of a Governor's province, while Sind was detached from Bombay and given separate existence from April 1, 1936. The Commu-

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48Sitaramayya Dr. Pattabhi *HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS,* Vol. I, Indian National Congress, 1935, pp 519, 520

49Thompson Edward, *ENLIST INDIA FOR FREEDOM,* Gollancz, 1940, p 50.

50Sitaramayya Dr. Pattabhi *HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS,* Vol I, Indian National Congress, 1935, p 520.

nal Award of August 1932[51] conceded a statutory majority to Muslims in the Punjab and Bengal in relation to the Hindus. In July 1934, reservation of 25 per cent. of places in the services for Muslims was announced, while the Government of India Act of 1935 made the Governor-General the custodian of residuary powers, thus allaying the Muslim 'fear' about the so-called tyranny of the Hindu majority. These far-reaching concessions were reinforced by a categorial assurance, given to Muslims on July 2, 1935, that within the range of the Communal Award the British Government would not countenance any change 'unless such changes had been agreed to between the communities concerned'.

The assumption of office by the Congress in July 1937 in the majority of provinces, its injudicious exclusion of the Muslim League's members from the provincial cabinets and the failure of the League to assume the responsibilities of government anywhere in the country, deeply offended Jinnah's pride. Mighty indictments were drawn up against the Congress ministries even before they had settled down in their new position and a raging and tearing campaign was started, inflaming the naturally excitable minds of the Muslim masses by proclaiming that their religion was in danger There was an astonishing transformation in the mental processes of Jinnah who, in his presidential address to the 26th session of his party, declared that by pursuing an 'exclusively Hindu policy' the Congress ministries became 'responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India'. The Second World War, which broke out in September 1939, greatly encouraged this attitude. In March of the following year, the Muslim League sprang a surprise on the world by announcing that 'no constitutional plan would be workable in the country' unless two 'independent states'

[51] The Award was given by Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister Years before he produced this reactionary document, he had roundly condemned Minto and the Anglo-Indian officials for 'showing the Muslims special favours' But responsibility had presumably forced him to toe the official line on India's future

were carved out of it. Jinnah had evidently no clear conception of the significance of the famous Lahore resolution either then or many years later. 'I myself,' says the Aga Khan 'am convinced that even as late as 1946 Jinnah had no clear and final idea of his goal, no awareness that he would, within a twelve month, be the founder of a new nation.'[52] But British policy clinched the issue and eventually helped him to make up his mind.

Minto's policy of stimulating the separatist tendencies of the Muslims thus bore fruit in the shape of India's partition. His regime was no less noteworthy for seeking to suppress the resurgent nationalism and for the persecution of the press. To all these measures, so opposed to just and enlightened government, Morley, the Liberal, gave his wholehearted support. Both the Viceroy and the Secretary of State evinced partiality for Muslims, and Minto's action in giving them the right of separate representation received Morley's fullest approbation. He only cautioned the Viceroy against the risk of dropping 'our Hindu parcels' while 'picking up the Musalman'. On his assumption of office, Minto had noticed in India that 'beneath a seemingly calm surface there existed a mass of smothered political discontent'. He realised the need for assuaging Indian exasperation, but the remedy was beyond the scope of British policy. Educated young men increasingly felt the humiliation of their country's subordination to a distant and alien power whose sole concern was to advance its own interests, thus unjustly depriving the sons of the soil of all opportunities of national service Moderate Indian politicians knew of no means by which the fervour of the young men could be harnessed to constructive purposes Thus, frustration and repression inexorably led the spirited youth of the country to embrace the philosophy of violence On April 30, 1908, a bomb intended for an unpopular Magistrate of Calcutta, accidentally killed two Englishwomen when they were returning from the Club at Muzaffarpur. In February 1909, the public prosecutor in the Alipore case

[52] *THE MEMOIRS OF AGA KHAN*, Simon & Schuster, 1954, p.296.

was murdered. In July of the same year, Sir William Curzon Wyllie and Dr. Lalkaka were murdered at the Imperial Institute in London, the perpetrator of the crime being a well-born and cultured Indian from the Punjab. In December, the Collector of Nasik, Jackson, was shot dead Secret societies, pledged to the overthrow of the foreign regime, had come into existence in many parts of the country and some of them were discovered in Gwalior, the Deccan and East Bengal.

Minto's counter-measures were frightful and ruthless and were as unwarranted as the political murders. He easily enlisted the support of the princes in combating violence and the chief among them, the Nizam, assured His Excellency that he was a great believer in repression. For lending his support to a genuine agrarian grievance in the Punjab, the great national leader, Lala Lajpat Rai and his colleague, Ajit Singh, were arrested and deported without trial under an antiquated and musty statute as old as 1818. The Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act was passed in 1907, giving the Government power to 'proclaim' an area and to prohibit public meetings within it. The menace of the bomb was sought to be met by adopting in June 1908 the English Explosives Act as an Indian statute. In December of the same year, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act was put on the statute book, arming the executive with powers to deal with 'seditious conspiracies' by means of summary trials. On February 9, 1910, a new Press Act was passed, compelling the publisher or printer of a newspaper to give security for good behaviour. The Act contained a number of other provisions which rendered any fearless criticism of the Government most hazardous. 'These,' says Minto's biographer, 'were strong measures for a Liberal Secretary of State, but Mr. Morley rose gallantly to the occasion, accepted the need for them, and loyally defended the Government of India in Parliament.'[53] On the subject of repression, Morley wrote in his

[53] Buchan John, *LORD MINTO: A MEMOIR,* Nelson, 1924, pp.255,256.

Recollections: 'Coercion was of course the standardised medicine that always left the malady where it was, unless it made it worse.' These observations relating to Ireland had evidently no application to India where the British norms of administration were uniquely original.

The well-known Morley-Minto reforms, born out of so many travails, were preceded by prolonged debates and discussions on the admission of Indians to the Viceroy's Executive Council and the Secretary of State's India Council. To have or not to have the 'natives' in positions of trust and responsibility became an empire-shaking issue, in which racial prejudice and the fear of 'loosening the bolts' so firmly fixed on India were given full play. The Anglo-Indians were amazed and aghast at the boldness of the suggestion, while for Morley it meant working with 'coloured' colleagues. 'The real truth,' he had told Lady Minto, 'is that I am an occidental, not an oriental; don't betray this fatal secret or I shall be ruined.' His liking for Muslims was, of course, political, for, he added: 'I think I like Mohammedans, but I cannot go much further than that in an easterly direction.' Besides other powerful men, a formidable array of ex-Viceroys like Elgin, Lansdowne and Curzon, including the generous-hearted Ripon, were strongly opposed to the elevation of Indians to the membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Even King Edward was seriously concerned at the proposal and 'in a talk to Lord Morley, while admitting that there was no alternative against a unanimous Cabinet, remonstrated vigorously against the whole proceeding.'[54] Evidently, Indians were interlopers in their own country. In spite of widespread opposition, Krishna Gobinda Gupta of the Indian Civil Service and Saiyid Husain Bilgrami, who had been a member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council, were appointed members of the Secretary of State's India Council at the close of August 1907. In March 1909, Satyendra Sinha, a brilliant and

[54]Buchan John, *LORD MINTO: A MEMOIR*, Nelson, 1924, p.286.

prosperous lawyer from Calcutta, was persuaded to join the Viceroy's Executive Council as Law Member. More honours came to Sinha in later years, culminating in his elevation to the peerage.

The Morley-Minto reforms, leading to the framing of the Indian Councils Act of 1909, have been described as marking a break with the past. It is difficult to say what exactly is meant by this term when the authors of the reforms were themselves so categorical in repudiating any intention on their part of transferring real power to Indians. Like the previous bodies, the reformed legislative councils were no better than *darbars*, having no manner of resemblance to parliaments. The statute merely broadened the representation authorised by the Council Act of 1892 and offered better facilities for debate. It certainly did not embody any new policy and such changes as were introduced in the composition of the legislatures and the government of the country were only those of degree and not of kind. The numerical strength of the legislative bodies was increased; the size of the Governor-General's Council was raised from 16 to 60, while that of the Bengal, Madras and Bombay legislatures was increased from 20 to 50. The United Provinces also received the same number of members. Nomination remained the dominant factor in the selection of members who were divided into three different categories, namely, nominated official members, nominated non-official members and elected members. The regulations under the Act provided for non-official majorities in the provincial legislatures, but this certainly did not imply that the majority was to consist wholly of elected members. Even this small and dubious concession was denied to the Governor-General's Legislative Council which was statutorily required to maintain an official majority. The disruptive system of representation by communities was introduced so that there was no uniformity in the methods and principles of voting. Indeed, the entire system was vitiated by the grant of over-representation to some classes and by meting out grossly unjust treatment to others, the

intention being to give a preponderant place to the conservative and sectional interests in the councils to ensure opposition to any change in the balance of power and to the demand for effective political concessions. Greater latitude was allowed to members to move resolutions, not only on the budget, but on any matter of general public interest and to divide the council upon them. But the verdict of the house would only be in the form of a recommendation which the Government was free to reject. Indeed, as Morley declared in his speech of December 1908, the Government 'will deal with these resolutions as carefully, or as carelessly as they think fit, just as Governments do here.'[55] The analogy of England was, however, misleading. The executive in India was as firmly entrenched and irremovable as the mighty Himalayas! The verdict of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on the Morley-Minto reforms is illuminating. 'Excessive claims,' says the Report, 'were made for them in the enthusiasm of the moment, but in any case they cannot justly be described as embodying any new policy.' The Report adds that the reforms were based 'on the fundamental principle that the executive government should retain the final decision on all questions.' We need not, however, be too critical of the Morley-Minto reforms, for their two successors, the Acts of 1919 and 1935, were equally devoid of any substance. India received a truly democratic constitution only when she became an independent country.

[55]Ilbert Sir Courtenay, *THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA*, Clarendon Press, pp.111, 112.

10. LORD CHELMSFORD

MINTO was succeeded by Lord Hardinge in October 1910. The new Viceroy was the grandson of the Governor-General of 1844-48 and was a man of keen intellect and sound perception. He was chosen for the high office in preference to the impetuous Kitchener who had long cherished the ambition of assuming the dictatorship of India. The Morley-Minto reforms were regarded by many Indians as a counterfeit of real constitutional progress and yet so great were Hardinge's abilities of persuasion that he succeeded in enlisting for them the co-operation of stalwarts like Gokhale, the 'wisest and ablest of the moderates'. He cleverly side-tracked Morley's disclaimer about the aims and import of the reforms by charming the country's politicians with his affability and friendliness during his frequent informal meetings with them. He managed the visit of King George V and the Queen to India in the winter of 1911 when a magnificent Darbar was held in Delhi, marking perhaps the 'peak' of British rule in this country.

The royal visit and the Delhi display furnished a fitting opportunity for making some important announcements concerning the country's affairs. Much to the consternation of the commercial community of Calcutta and Lord Curzon, the capital of India was transferred to Delhi. Notwithstanding the various interpretations put upon it—and most of them were rather fanciful—the decision was indeed a wise one, for the geographical position of Calcutta was probably the strongest argument against continuing it as the country's foremost official metropolis. Bengal's inflamed sentiment was soothed by annulling the partition and by elevating it to the status of a full-fledged Governor's province. Bihar and Orissa, including Chota Nagpur, were constituted into a Lieutenant Governorship, while Assam was allowed to revert to its former position as a Chief Commissionership.

Although it was impossible for him to change his country's policy towards India, Hardinge remained a sincere friend of her people. The attempt on his life in December 1912 during his state entry into Delhi did not affect his attachment for them. To the great embarrassment of the British Government, he publicly affirmed in November 1913 the 'sympathy of India, deep and burning, and not only of Indians, but of all lovers of India like myself, for their compatriots in South Africa in their resistance to invidious and unjust laws'. Such pronouncements were hardly calculated to improve the status of Indians abroad unless there was a fundamental change in their position in their own country, but the fact that Hardinge felt it necessary to champion their cause by brushing aside the rigid proprieties of protocol and diplomacy, is evidence of the sincere attachment he felt towards this country.

It was perhaps fortunate for Britain that when she was drawn into the First World War in August 1914, her chief representative in India was at the height of his popularity. In spite of what Edwin Montagu truly described as her 'hideous' poverty, she strained her resources to the utmost in rushing to England's assistance. At the outbreak of the war, there were in the country 230,000 Indian ranks and some 80,000 British officers and men. Very soon, the country furnished the Allies 21 cavalry regiments, 69 infantry battalions and 204 guns. The tempo of war effort was stepped up in proportion to the need, with little consideration for the country's capacity to sustain such an enormous strain. Before peace was declared, more than 800,000 combatants and over 400,000 non-combatants had been recruited to serve the Allies. Apart from this impressive contribution of man-power, the Indian legislature unanimously voted a gift of £100 million in 1917 for Imperial war expenditure and another £140 million by way of War loans. In addition, India accepted the burden of maintaining nearly one million of her troops serving overseas at a cost ranging from £20 million to £30 million. She undertook further liabilities in September 1918 totalling £12 million. These are staggering figures, and the country

could only make such astounding sacrifices by inflicting untold suffering upon its desperately impoverished people. Commenting on its war efforts, Sir Austen Chamberlain said: 'India had bled herself white at the beginning of the war to supply the deficiencies of the Empire in troops, arms and guns.' Asquith, the Prime Minister, welcomed the Indian aid with 'appreciation and affection', while Birkenhead, to prove the value of this country's continued subordination to Britain, recalled the heroic part played by the Indian troops in the war thus: 'The winter campaign of 1914-15 would have witnessed the loss of the Channel ports but for the stubborn valour of the Indian Corps....Without India, the war would have been immensely prolonged, if indeed without her help, it could have been brought to a victorious conclusion.' Birkenhead made these commendations, not so much out of a sense of gratitude as to emphasize the fact that, being an 'incalculable asset to the mother country,' India should on no account be allowed to attain independent nationhood.

In a period when world-shaking events were deciding the destinies of many countries, it is idle to believe that a mere change in the Viceroyalty would have deflected the course of events in India, but at least some of the follies and tragedies that marked Lord Chelmsford's term could perhaps have been avoided if Hardinge had remained in office till the end of the hostilities instead of retiring from the country in 1912. Historians have not ceased to marvel at the choice of Chelmsford at one of the most critical periods in India's history and in that of the world. The new Viceroy was nearly fifty years old and yet he had given no proofs of his ability as an administrator. Perhaps, his fellowship at All Souls was his best recommendation in the eyes of Asquith, the classically-minded prime minister. But as a writer pertinently remarks, 'Greek verbs are not necessarily talismans to statesmanship'. According to no standard of appraisal could Chelmsford be called a competent man. In his inability to exercise independent judgment, he bore a striking resemblance to his remote predecessors, Shore and Barlow, but with the

additional disadvantage of not sharing their expert knowledge of the country. He allowed himself to be led tamely by others and virtually presented a *carte blanche* to the permanent officials whose incapacity to move with the times had become proverbial. With their minds firmly anchored to the *status quo*, they showed an uncompromising hostility to any change that threatened to disturb their time-honoured privileges and prerogatives. Montagu, the Secretary of State, records: 'He (Chelmsford) seems to me to be strongly prejudiced in his views, holding them very, very keenly, but I do not seem to see that any of them are his views. They always seem to me to be views collected from his surroundings.'[1] When mighty events crowded upon him, the Viceroy took shelter from his responsibilities behind the orders of his superiors and the advice of his subordinates. In India, there was no dearth of bureaucrats to make up their minds for him.

It was, of course, impossible for Chelmsford or the governing class of his country to concede the fateful significance of the world war. At the time of its outbreak, England was riding on the crest of prosperity and glory. Living in a world of her own, it was impossible for her to realise how her preponderance had aroused abiding jealousies and hatreds among other less fortunate predatory Powers of Europe. For long decades, Germany had been smarting under the indignity of being denied 'a place in the sun.' A great military power, she watched with growing disgust and anger how her weak neighbours and Britain had been acquiring vast overseas areas for self-aggrandizement. It was a deep 'national affront' to a 'colony-starved' Germany to watch England asserting sovereign rights over an empire 105 times her size, India alone being some twenty times bigger than her. France, whose empire was the second biggest, had built up a greater part of the mighty edifice within a ridiculously short period from 1870. The Belgians and the Dutch claimed overseas territories eighty and sixty times the size

[1]Montagu Edwin, *AN INDIAN DIARY*, Heinemann, 1930, p.16.

of their respective homelands.[2] The might, the majesty and the abounding prosperity of the imperialist Powers were derived almost entirely from the exploitation of their dependencies. The lifeblood of the Netherlands, says John Gunther, came from Indonesia: 'Pumping into Holland from Insulinde, as the Indies are called, is a stream of invigorating wealth. The Indies tail is what wags the Dutch dog. The Indies are the *big loot* of Asia.'[3] This is only an example of the general pattern of colonialism that flourished till the end of the Second World War.

Europe was thus divided into 'have' and 'have not' Powers, Germany being condemned to the status of an underdog. The seeds of war thus lay fertile and when it broke out in 1914, it did not come a day too soon. Indeed, long before Kaiser Wilhelm asked for his country 'a place in the sun' and Hitler demanded a 'redistribution of the riches of the earth', German economists and political philosophers like Friedrich List and Treitschke had begun to preach the gospel of colonial power on a scale that 'necessitated as a condition of its fulfilment, the previous defeat and displacement of Britain as the power whose world-wide position everywhere stood across Germany's path'.[4] 'If our nation,' wrote Treitschke, 'dares to follow an independent colonial policy with determination, a collision of our interests with those of England is unavoidable.' The Kaiser, who in 1895 gave his people 'world policy' as their watch-word, was perhaps a martinet in royal robes, but he was clear in his mind, as other thinking Germans were before him, that a clash of arms with England was inevitable if the fatherland was to participate in the glory of despoiling the weaker countries of the world. It was a brutally correct analysis because none of the predatory Powers was prepared to share its spoils with others. The Kaiser's telegram to President Kruger of South Africa was therefore, not 'an act of infatuated misjudgment,' but a

[2]Amery the Rt Hon. L. S, *THE GERMAN COLONIAL CLAIM*, W. & R. Chambers, 1939, p. 142.
[3]Gunther John, *INSIDE ASIA*, Harper, 1939, p 359
[4]Amery the Rt. Hon. L. S, *THE GERMAN COLONIAL CLAIM*, W. & R. Chambers, 1939, p. 49.

carefully worded challenge to Britain against her expansionist policy. The episode would perhaps have precipitated a global conflict if the Kaiser had been ready with his warlike preparations In that event, France and Russia would have fought 'for their different African and Asiatic objects on the side of Germany against Britain'.[5]

The defeat of the Kaiser and his country in the war of 1914-18 did not, however, deter the Germans from urging their case for a share in the colonies. They refused to appreciate the profound philosophy built up by men like L S Amery extolling the virtues of colonialism as practised by Britain. Amery, who, as Secretary of State for India during some of the most critical years of the last war, made valiant efforts to save India for the Empire, wrote with becoming solemnity that the British conception of colonialism was always that of 'the establishment across the seas of a new national life based on British spirit of tolerance'. The extension of such beneficence was, however, limited to regions 'open to British settlement'. Whatever might be the element of truth in this claim, there is no doubt that the 'non-white' colonies could not expect to receive any such considerate treatment. Amery, who embodied his views on colonialism in a book published in 1939, that is, on the eve of the last war, considered it prudent to observe: 'In such circumstances, any surrender to the demand to haul down our flag and to abdicate our responsibilities would destroy our moral authority and gravely impair our security.'[6] Indeed, it was Britain that set the pace for other 'holding' Powers to reject all demands for a reconsideration of colonial claims, with her statesmen making the astounding claim that 'the retention of the British Empire is the one unchanging thing in a changing world'!

The whole issue of colonialism is one of the most sordid affairs in the history of man Resting on greed and ag-

[5]Garvin J L, *THESE EVENTFUL YEARS,* The Twentieth Century in the Making as told by many of its makers, Vol I, The Encyclopaedia Britannica Co Ltd, 1924. p 6

[6]Amery the Rt Hon L. S, *THE GERMAN COLONIAL CLAIM,* W & R Chambers, 1939, p 22

grandizement, it ignores the profound truth, enunciated by President Roosevelt in 1941, that there has never been and there never will be any race of people fit to serve as masters over their fellow-men. The crisis, which confronted civilization twice in our generation, would not have arisen if this wholesome lesson had been learnt by the colonial Powers after the ordeal of 1914-18. But unfortunately selfishness triumphed over sagacity and the terrible sufferings of the war years were soon forgotten. India's travails both during and after the war were indescribable. Besides the denudation of her resources, she was stricken by a terrible epidemic of influenza which swept away five million of her people in 1918. England also became war-weary and suffered financial ruin. Philip Snowden, with his characteristic precision, wrote: 'Great Britain spent some £10,000,000,000 on its part in that colossal tragedy. The war has left Great Britain with a debt of over £7,000,000,000. We have to raise each year £350,000,000 for the service of this debt. At the present rate of repayment of the debt, it will take 140 years to liquidate it.' Besides exposing the frailties of the British Empire, the war delivered a staggering blow to the prestige of England which had long enjoyed the reputation as an invincible nation. The establishment of the League of Nations made further inroads into her importance as a world Power reducing her in status to the position of other leading countries. The Second Word War (1939-45) which, as Sir Winston Churchill has observed, was a continuation of the first, was even more fatal to empires and to the 'ideas and ideals' on the basis of which they had been built. The global conflict, compared to which the first world war was a mere punitive expedition, reduced to a chimera the devoted labours of a succession of imperial handymen on behalf of their empire, thus exposing to mockery their confident belief in their capacity to ordain things for eternity. In any case, imperialism as it was conceived and practised by men like Curzon, Kitchener, Birkenhead and Churchill, to mention only four names, has, thanks to the last war, been bombed out of existence.

In spite of her outstanding contribution to Allied victory, India received no substantial benefits from the first world war. The discipline, the loyalty and the valour displayed by her armed forces in the different theatres of war were appreciated and admired, but the right of Indians to bear arms in their own right and essentially for the defence of their motherland, was not conceded. Even during the early years of British rule in India, fair-minded persons like Sir Thomas Munro deplored the existence of a system that rigorously excluded Indians from joining the profession of arms on honourable terms. 'No elevation of character,' Munro wrote, 'can be expected among men who, in the military line, cannot attain to any rank above that of subahdar, where they are as much below an ensign as an ensign is below the Commander-in-Chief.'[7] The passage of time brought no change in the status of the Indian soldier who remained a mere 'sepoy', fighting the cause of others for sordid wages. The institution of the Viceroy's Commission was a unique one and was brought into existence in order to furnish a link between officers and men, as the former were all foreigners The famous proclamation of Queen Victoria that no qualified and competent person would be excluded from any office merely on grounds of race or creed was reduced to a dead-letter. 'The studious exclusion of Indians,' says General Sir George Chesney, 'from all but the humblest places in our army is so conspicuous that only one inference can be placed upon it—that we are afraid to trust them The Indian people are not held to us by any feelings of attachment'[8] It was this feeling of suspicion, reinforced by the determination not to concede India's right to self-government, which dominated the military policy of the British Government in this country until the last years of its withdrawal

Strange and objectionable measures were adopted to ensure the continued and absolute dominion of the British

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[7]Gleig G R. *THE LIFE OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR THOMAS MUNRO,* Vol. I, Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830, pp 465-66.

[8]Chesney General Sir George, *INDIAN POLITY,* Longmans, 1894, pp 270-71.

Government over the country's armed forces. The salutary principle of raising composite regiments consisting of men drawn from different parts of the country and from different communities, was abandoned after the rebellion of 1857. Sir John Lawrence was, as we have seen, a good friend of India, but, like a true Briton, he held the interests of his own country foremost. He was a prominent member of the Punjab Committee of 1858 which made a study of the military problems in the wake of the Mutiny. The Committee says: 'As we cannot do without a large native army in India, our main object is to make that army safe; and next to the grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force, comes a counterpoise of Natives against Natives.' The Committee found it necessary to enunciate this disruptive doctrine because it was discovered that 'different races mixed together do not long preserve their distinctiveness; their corners and angles and feelings and prejudices get rubbed off, till at last they assimilate'. The growth of such a community of feeling was most detrimental to the practice of the doctrine of counterpoise. The real aim should, therefore, be to make 'the Muhammedan of one country despise, fear or dislike the Muhammedan of another.' It was believed that the spirit of separatism could be best fostered by confining the recruitment of men to the local areas and by segregating them from those belonging to regiments raised in other parts of the country. Thus, class composition became a dominant factor in the organisation of the army which consisted of a congeries of mutually exclusive units composed of such elements as the Dogras, the Punjabi Mussalmans, the Sikhs, the Rajputs, the Marathas and a host of others. Nevertheless, this division, unlike separate electorates, failed to survive the tide of nationalism in later years.

The Mutiny also helped the invention of the myth that certain classes of people, inhabiting certain regions of the country, were inherently incapable of wielding arms. The disbandment of a large segment of the Bengal army which had given the greatest trouble to the British during the

uprising, gave a fillip to the doctrine of martial and non-martial races. In pursuit of this doctrine, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, certain parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bombay, Madras and Madhya Pradesh were condemned as a vast waste-land for purposes of recruitment. Thenceforward, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province became the most prolific recruiting centres, the former eventually achieving distinction as the 'sword arm of India'. The division was, of course, absurd, for the British had won their empire in this country with the valour of the very men whom they now chose to designate as cowardly and non-martial. Moreover, the two world wars, when recuitment embraced the entire country, thoroughly exposed the untenability of the doctrine. Besides declaring a large area as militarily sterile, Indians were excluded from the Artillery and other scientific branches of the army.

The struggle for the admission of the nationals of this country to the officer ranks makes even more depressing reading. From the first, it became an axiom of British military policy in India to create and perpetuate the illusion that no Indian, however able or accomplished, could claim to be the equal of the British officer. The Indian soldier, it was urged, could fight skilfully and valiantly only under the orders of his European commanders. 'It is this consciousness,' wrote Lord Roberts, 'of the inherent superiority of the European which has won for us India. However well-educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank that we could bestow upon him would cause him to be considered as an equal by the British officer or looked up to by the last joined British subaltern.' It is indeed impossible to have patience with such a blatant assertion of racial superiority. Drawing attention to this outburst—and it was none other—the distinguished authors of the Sapru Committee Report[9] offered their considered views

[9]The Report of the Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee, 1945, was compiled by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. M R. Jayakar, Sir N Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Kunwar Sir Jagdish Prasad.

on the issue in these words: 'In no sphere of Government has there been such bitter and prolonged conflict between Indian demands and the stubborn and deliberately dilatory policy of the British Government, so palpably based on racial arrogance and deep distrust of the educated classes.'[10]

Three years after the first world war, an expert body known as the Shea Committee was appointed to make specific proposals for the 'Indianization' of the officer ranks. The Committee at first suggested a period of forty-two years, which was later modified to thirty. But the recommendation was only of academic interest, for the Committee candidly declared its doubts about the capacity of educated Indians to lead their country's armed forces. It also urged the nationalisation of the officer cadre by units in order, to quote the words of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, 'to avoid the difficulty of making white officers serve under Indian officers'. Thus, the controversial Eight-Unit scheme came into existence. The idea was, however, not new, for the principle of segregation had been advocated by men like Sir George Chesney many decades before. And yet a responsible body like the Simon Commission maintained that the scheme had 'nothing to do with the race to which the officer belongs'.[11]

Another Committee, under the chairmanship of General Sir Andrew Skeen, was appointed in June 1925 to make recommendations on how best the supply of Indian candidates for the King's Commission could be increased. The Committee, which consisted of ten Indians, presented a unanimous report in November 1926. Besides urging the extension of the scope for the employment of Indians in the officer ranks, the Committee suggested the setting up of a Military College in India by 1933 on the lines of Sandhurst. In the wider interest of promoting a true feeling of comradeship between British and Indian officers, it asked that the Eight-Unit scheme should be dropped It

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[10] *CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS OF THE SAPRU COMMITTEE,* Published by Kunwar Sir Jagadish Prasad, 1945, p 272.

[11] *REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION* (Simon Commission), Vol. I, 1930, p.102.

also recommended that half of the total cadre of officers in the Indian Army should be the nationals of this country by 1952. The Report was obviously embarrassing to the Government which took fifteen months to announce its decisions, most of which were against the expert body's recommendations. It regarded the establishment of a Military College in 1933 as 'pre-mature' and upheld the scheme for the segregation of Indian officers on the ground that, should there be a fall in the standard of efficiency consequent on the nationalisation of the officer cadre, its evil effects might not be felt by the entire army! The Simon Commission went a step further and dismissed the whole issue of the nationalisation of the officer cadre as of no great urgency. It also defended the doctrine of martial and non-martial races.

The stubborn refusal on the part of the authorities to countenance India's just demands, provoked the bitter resentment of even moderate-minded politicians. The eminent Liberal leader, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, felt constrained to deplore the inability of the Government 'to identify themselves with the abiding interests of India and to sympathise with the growing sentiment of nationalism' despite the heroic sacrifices made by her people during the war.[12] In another context, he dismissed the Simon Commission's views on Defence as 'an uncritical reproduction of an official memorandum'. The Commission had naively observed that the method by which India secured a national army was not so immediately important as the fact that the process of 'Indianisation' had begun. At the same time, with a strange disregard for consistency, it had declared: 'It is not to be supposed that units recruited in Britain and officered by British officers are going to be mercenaries in some future India where the ultimate military authority rests with an Indian Minister for War, or with an Indian Cabinet, responsible to an Indian elected Assembly'[13] It

[12]Aiyer Sir P S Sivaswamy, *INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS*, Taraporevala, 1928, p 102

[13]*REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION* (Simon Commission), Vol. I, p 106.

did not occur to the distinguished Commissioners that by the same token, Indians were perfectly entitled to resent the indignity of being called upon to function as mercenaries in their own country. India's defence problem was thus developed into a deadlock so that the issue of her independence might not be considered in terms of immediate possibility.

The Round Table Conferences in London, which were supposed to draw up a Dominion constitution for India, adroitly sidetracked the issue of defence by taking shelter behind the smoke-screen of vague generalisations. The importunities of leaders like Sapru, Jayakar and Jinnah during the deliberations perhaps hastened the establishment of the Military Academy at Dehra Dun in 1932. The scope thus afforded for the training of officers for the defence services inside the country was, however, disappointingly inadequate, considering the magnitude of the problem of nationalisation. The Government of India Act of 1935, described in effusive terms as the charter of independence, conceded nothing by way of transfer of military power to Indians. Defence was placed on the list of reserved subjects and its administration was vested in the Governor-General who was made responsible, not to the country's central legislature, but to the Secretary of State and the British Parliament.

But all such efforts to postpone to an indefinite future the fulfilment of India's demand for opportunities to assume responsibility for her own defence were frustrated by the Second World War which broke out in September 1939. All the old hesitations and hatreds and all doubts and distinctions were brushed aside under the categorical imperative of an all-consuming world conflict. Reforms that would probably have taken many generations to be initiated and completed were telescoped within the span of a few years. At the outbreak of the war, the Army in India was officered by 2,880 officers, exclusive of the reserve of officers, of whom not more than 500 were Indians holding junior ranks and serving mostly in the infantry

and cavalry regiments. In 1944, there were 150 King's Commissioned Indian Officers, 400 Indian Commissioned Officers and 4,460 Indian Emergency Commissioned Officers.[14] In October 1945, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Claude Auchinleck, stated that the number of Indian Emergency Commissioned Officers was 8,000 as against 11,900 Europeans of that category. In the previous year, he had stated that the distinction between British and Indian Officers no longer existed and that in the Army 'there were just soldiers'. Nevertheless, the revulsion to the transfer of the Defence portfolio to an Indian Minister still persisted and was one of the potent causes for the failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission in 1942. The principle of admitting Indians to this responsibility was conceded, but the subjects that were proposed to be transferred to the Minister were absurdly insignificant, namely, canteens, stationery and printing, public relations, social arrangements for foreign missions and amenities for troops! Jawaharlal Nehru dismissed the scheme as 'simply ludicrous'.[15] The naval mutiny in Bombay in February 1946 and its wide repercussions among the armed forces in the country, made it abundantly clear that Britain could no longer assert, much less enforce, the claim that her presence in this country was indispensable for its protection The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 caused the dissolution of the East India Company and the naval uprising of 1946 became the precursor of the withdrawal of British rule from India in the following year. To-day, India has a well-developed and a truly national defence organisation with its three arms, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, functioning efficiently. The National Academy at Khadakvasla near Poona, formally inaugurated by the Prime Minister on October 6, 1949, ensures a regular supply of junior officers to all the

[14]These approximate figures were given by Major-General F. M. Moore in an article entitled *THE POST-WAR INDIAN ARMY*, published in the Journal of the United Service Institution of India for October 1944

[15]Moraes Frank, *JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*, Macmillan of New York, 1956, p 290.

three branches of the services. The Indian armed forces are organised essentially for the defence of the country. Since independence, Indian contingents have been sent abroad to police the peace of the world. In times of domestic calamity, such as famines and floods, the armed personnel render inestimable service to the civilian population.

It was, of course, impossible for Chelmsford to change or modify the British Government's policy towards India's defence, but it was entirely within his power to administer his charge with prudence and moderation. India, like all the countries that had made heavy sacrifices during the war, was overwhelmed by depresssion and uneasiness. Her tribute of blood, tears and money to the Allied cause was, as we have seen, enormous and, for a country with her resources, unique. When she was in such a frame of mind, Chelmsford's Government considered it wise to adopt legislation seeking to place unlimited and arbitrary powers into the hands of the executive. The controversial Criminal Law Amendment Bills, more widely known as the Rowlatt Bills, were introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council on February 6, 1918 and eventually passed, to quote Sir Thomas W. Holderness, 'in the teeth of the impassioned opposition of the non-official members of his legislative council'.[10] Knowing the temper of the country and the Draconian character of the proposed measure, Surendranath Banerjea pleaded that the consideration of the Bills might be postponed to the September session. 'When Government,' declared the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, 'undertake a repressive policy, the innocent are not safe. Men like me would not be considered innocent. Innocent then is he who forswears politics, who takes no part in public movements of the time, who retires into his house and mumbles his prayers, pays his taxes and *salams* the Government officials all round.' Sastri, who was not accustomed to use strong language or to issue threats,

[10]Garvin J L, *THESE EVENTFUL YEARS*, Vol. II, The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1924, pp 318, 319.

warned the Government that if his appeal against the Bills went unheeded there would be very few in the House who would not 'join the agitation'. But the advice of such devoted friends of the Government was brushed aside as worthy of no serious consideration.

Gandhi, who had been watching the growing estrangement between the Government and the people with grave concern, regarded the Rowlatt Act as the last straw. On March 1, 1919, he established in Bombay what was called the Satyagraha Sabha to organise a country-wide opposition to the unpopular measure. His call for *hartal* or cessation of normal business, was responded to with enthusiasm throughout the country. In the Punjab, the popular demonstration was so impressive and yet so peaceful that it provoked the fury of the province's Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer. To the suggestion that the success of the *hartal* was due to the 'soul force' of Gandhi, he rejoined: 'There is another force greater than Gandhi's soul force.'[17] As the eminent authors[18] of the Congress Report on the Punjab happenings observed, O'Dwyer in fact 'invited violence from the people so that he could crush them.'[19] O'Dwyer was an ardent votary of imperialism. He ridiculed India's right to self-government by quoting, in the vein of a scholar, the well-known lines: 'for forms of government let fools contend'. Montagu described him as 'a little rough Irishman with great vigour of expression' and noted with disapproval the Governor's opposition to 'everything.' 'He is determined,' recorded the Secretary of State, 'to maintain his position as the idol of the reactionary forces, and to try

[17] *REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY THE PUNJAB SUB COMMITTEE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS*, Indian National Congress, 1920, p 44

[18] The Congress investigating body consisted of. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, C. R Das, Abbas S. Tayabji, Dr. M. R. Jayakar and K. Santanam.

[19] *REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY THE PUNJAB SUB COMMITTEE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL* CONGRESS, Indian National Congress, 1920 p 10.

and govern by the iron hand.'[20] This truculent man, who had himself described the Punjabis as loyal, brave, enterprising and progressive, asked for and obtained from Chelmsford's Government permission to impose martial law in the province. The Viceroy's short-sightedness was amazing. The Punjab had contributed nearly half a million men to the War and apart from its deep economic distress as in the rest of the country, it nursed a strong resentment against the press-gang methods that had been adopted by the O'Dwyer Government to enrol recruits. A dangerous situation was thus created by the imprudence of Chelmsford and the vindictiveness and impetuosity of the Punjab Governor.

The detention of Gandhi on April 9, 1919 at a small station when he was proceeding from Bombay to Delhi and the ban on his entry into the Punjab and Delhi, together with the deportation of trusted leaders like Drs. Kitchlew and Satyapal from Amritsar on the following day, raised the curtain for the enactment of one of the most tragic dramas in the history of Indo-British relations. Some foul crimes were committed by the excited mob in the city of Amritsar where a few European officials of foreign banks were murdered. Miss Sherwood, a lady missionary, was set upon by a mob when bicycling in a narrow street and was left for dead after she had been severely beaten. She was, however, rescued later by kindly Indians in the neighbourhood. These were gross misdeeds and, however grave the provocation, were utterly indefensible, but the official reprisals bore all the frightful characteristics of an organised warfare against an unarmed civilian population, an overwhelming majority of whom had not only no manner of connection with the crimes but heartily detested them.

On April 12, 1919, General Dyer issued a proclamation banning all meetings and gatherings in the city, but the dissemination of the warning was left to the police. The Hunter Committee has felt constrained to observe: 'It does not appear what steps were taken to ensure its (proclama-

[20] Montagu Edwin, *AN INDIAN DIARY*, Heinemann, 1930, p.207.

tion's) publication.'[21] It, however, made no difference to General Dyer whether his warning had been conveyed in a manner that ensured compliance by the population. On April 13, some twenty thousand persons assembled in an enclosed rectangular piece of unused land, known as Jallianwala Baug, and the fact that there was such a large concourse of people, which included children and infants in arms, leads all fair-minded persons to the conclusion that the proclamation had not been widely publicized. At any rate, Dyer was determined to teach Indians an unforgettable lesson. When he heard that a meeting had been scheduled to be held at the Baug, he decided, as he later admitted in his evidence, to 'do all men to death till they were going to continue the meeting.' He considered such savage behaviour essential from the military point of view 'to make a wide impression.' He marched into the crowded Baug with ninety soldiers and ordered them to shoot without giving the assembled people a chance to disperse. Moreover, to quote the Hunter Committee, he 'continued firing for a substantial period of time after the crowd had commenced to disperse.' In all 1650 rounds were fired by the troops, with the death roll reaching the astounding figure of 1,000[22] The number of the injured persons was much larger C. F Andrews, that great friend of India, compared the Baug tragedy with the massacre of Glencoe. But Dyer was unrepentant Jawaharlal Nehru, who was travelling in the same compartment with the General soon after the Amritsar episode, was an unwitting listener to his boast. Dyer declared that he had the whole town at his mercy and that he felt like reducing it 'to a heap of ashes'[23] The Indian members of the Hunter Committee observe: "People like General Dyer have the fixed idea

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[21]*REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO INVESTIGATE THE DISTURBANCES IN THE PUNJAB, ETC.* Government of India, 1920, p 28.

[22]*REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY THE PUNJAB SUB COMMITTEE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS,* Indian National Congress, 1920, p 57

[23]Jawaharlal Nehru *AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY,* Bodley Head, 1936, p.67

that the effective way of governing in India is force. It is the same idea that General Drake-Brockman of Delhi gave expression to in his written statement at Delhi: 'Force is the only thing that an Asiatic has any respect for.' "[24]

It is unpleasant to dwell at length on this sordid story of man's inhumanity to man and so it is sufficient to say that in many places of the Punjab, the people were subjected to all forms of humiliation and oppression. At Amritsar, men were made to crawl like reptiles in the street where Miss Sherwood was assaulted. In many towns, the civil population was ordered to salute the Europeans to emphasize the inferiority of their race, while the cars of private owners were taken away from them for the use of their white rulers. Flogging was widely employed both to intimidate and humiliate all sections of the population. Students were exposed to untold hardships and at Gujranwalla, the birthplace of Ranjit Singh, they were forced to salute the Union Jack, while at Lahore one thousand students were made to walk sixteen miles a day for many days in the hot month of May. Aeroplanes were used at Gujranwalla and bombs were thrown to terrorize the civilians in the town and in the surrounding villages. None of the guilty persons were brought to book. On the contrary, Dyer, who ought to have forfeited his head under just laws, was praised, lionised, fraternised and liberally rewarded. In the House of Lords, Lord Finlay accused the Indian members of the Hunter Committee of partisanship[25]—an allegation that was effectively refuted by the Under Secretary of State for India, Lord Sinha. Indeed, the wisdom of appointing the Hunter Committee was doubted by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on the ground that the Government itself was the accused party. In the sequel, his objections raised in the Viceroy's Legislative Council, turned out to be entirely valid. It was impossible

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[24]*REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO INVESTIGATE THE DISTURBANCES IN THE PUNJAB, ETC*, Government of India, Calcutta, 1920, p.116.

[25]Setalvad Sir Chimanlal, *RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS*, Padma Publications, 1946, p.312.

for Lord Hunter and his British colleagues to indict the 'saviours' of the empire, while their Indian colleagues,[26] though not as 'radically disposed' as Congressmen, were determined to place before the world the enormity of official repression and frightfulness in the Punjab. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad records in his Memoirs that on one occasion Lord Hunter lost his temper and exclaimed: 'You people (meaning Setalvad and his Indian colleagues) want to drive the British out of the country.' Setalvad retorted that such a necessity would arise 'if the British are represented in this country by people as short-sighted and intolerant as yourself.' The estrangement between the Chairman and his Indian colleagues was irreconcilable.[27]

Coercion and repression have been extensively practised as the standardised remedy for the growth of nationalism in subject countries. India's experience in the Punjab and elsewhere was by no means unique, for even Ireland, so close to England both geographically and in other ways, failed to receive better treatment at the hands of her foreign rulers. The redoubtable Winston Churchill asked in May 1921 for one hundred thousand 'new special troops and police for the occupation of Republican Ireland,' besides thousands of armoured cars to back them. He wanted this formidable armed might to lace the country with 'cordons of blockhouses and barbed wire.' On September 23, he promised the Irish 'a real war, not mere bushranging.'[28] A vast volume of literature has been published on the disabilities that were suffered by Ireland under foreign domination. 'The Irish Catholic,' writes Francis Hackett, 'was excluded from the vote, from municipal and parliamentary offices, from even sitting in the gallery of the parliament. He was not allowed to become a barrister or solicitor, a sheriff or a constable....He was

[26]The three Indian members of the Hunter Committee were: Sir Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, Pandit Jagat Narayan and Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan

[27]Setalvad Sir Chimanlal, *RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS*, Padma Publications, 1946, p 311.

[28]MacAlpin Michael, *MR. CHURCHILL'S SOCIALISTS*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1941, p 82.

forbidden to teach school. He was forbidden to send his children abroad to school or college.'[29] Many fair-minded British statesmen have confessed to a sense of shame at the misbehaviour of their Government in Ireland. 'We have made Ireland,' declared Lord John Russell, 'I speak it deliberately — we have made it the most degraded and the most miserable country in the world.' As in India and in other countries, there was only one means of escape from such degradation and this was suggested by Arthur Griffin. 'It is not,' he said, 'British misgovernment, but British Government in Ireland, good or bad, we stand opposed to, and in that holy opposition we seek to band all our fellow-countrymen.'[30] That was also India's stand.

The end of the war saw feverish activities, not only to negotiate treaties with the defeated enemy, but to promote a settlement of world affairs. Indian representatives attended a number of conferences associated with imperial and other matters, but they did so, not in their own right but as British nominees. Such an arrangement, far from enhancing India's status merely advertised her subordination to England. The Dominion representatives deeply resented the presence of Indians at the Imperial Conference of Britain. Before the first World War, an Australian leader had declared that, while his countrymen were 'citizen-subjects' of the British Empire, the Indians were 'subject-citizens.' The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, who attended the Imperial Conference in 1921, admitted that the position of the Indian representatives was 'not comparable by any means to the position occupied by our colleagues from the Dominions.'[31] Two years later, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru complained at the Conference that as 'members of a common household,' Indians did not choose their place in the stables. For all her sacrifices, India thus drew a blank both nationally and internationally. The futility of her war

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[29]Hackett Francis, *THE STORY OF THE IRISH NATION,* D. Appleton 1939, pp 166, 167.

[30]Ibid, p.360.

[31]Hancock Prof. W. K, *SURVEY OF BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS,* Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1937, p 170.

effort has been aptly described by no less an authority than the *Cambridge History* which says: 'As succeeding years were to prove only too plainly, the closing scenes of the world war brought to India, not peace, but a sword.'[32] It was to combat the doctrine of the sword as the guiding principle of State policy that Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront of the nationalist movement.

The coming of Gandhi to Indian politics was an epoch-making event in the country's history. The Mahatma began his public life as an ardent supporter of the British. He sided with them against the Boers, although his personal sympathies were all with the latter. His experiences in South Africa did not deter him from placing his services unreservedly at the disposal of the British Government soon after the outbreak of the first world war. 'I thought,' he wrote, 'that England's need should not be turned into our opportunity and that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the war lasted.'[33] And yet this exemplar of ends and means and a determined opponent of war and violence became the most formidable and successful rebel against the British rule in India In many ways, his advent to the public life and his emergence as a unique leader were inevitable. Since the founding of the Congress in 1885, the fulfilment of the country's aspirations was sought through appeals to British sense of justice and fair-play, although such appeals were not infrequently enlivened by open-hearted criticism. Individual leaders like Lokmanya Tilak and Dr. Annie Besant, the illustrious British woman who had made India her home and the country's cause her own, fought fearlessly for national freedom and their lion-hearted championship enthused and enthralled a large section of the educated classes as well as a segment of the masses of people. But Gandhi went many steps forward. He roused the masses from their torpor, helped them to shed their soul-

[32]*THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p 488

[33]Gandhi M K, *AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OR THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH*, Navjivan Press, 1945, p 425

deadening fatalism, and galvanized them into men of action. The rare quality of unflinching courage, hitherto found only among a few top leaders, steadily spread to the common folk who, for the first time in history, became willing to make any sacrifices on behalf of their motherland.

From the beginning, Gandhi inspired unbounded confidence among the masses in his leadership. His communion with them was unique and inexplicable. He was, in the words of Nehru, 'the idealised personification of those vast millions,' although he himself did not belong to their stock. For him politics was not just a pleasant past time, but a serious business of life since it aimed at the realisation of fundamental political and economic goals. His successful non-violent campaign in 1917 on behalf of the peasants of Champaran in Bihar against the illegal exactions and oppressions of the European planters and the Kaira *satyagraha* in Gujarat in the following year, furnished the most convincing evidence of the potency of mass action. At the annual session of the Congress in December 1920, the goal of the organisation was redefined from that of securing 'a system of government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire' to the simple and straightforward one of winning *swaraj* by 'all legitimate and peaceful means.' The ratification of Tilak's famous slogan into a practical issue of India's goal, while it imparted considerable realism to the national politics, deeply disturbed the moderate elements who were not prepared to compromise on the doctrine of gradualness and constitutional agitation, although both these devices had proved themselves singularly sterile. Jinnah, for instance, could not reconcile himself to the Gandhian 'radicalism' and turned his back on the Congress for ever.[34] The moderates had earlier formed themselves into a separate party, with some of them eventually emerging as India's highly-respected Elder Statesmen.

[34]Setalvad Sir Chimanlal, *RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS*, Padma Publications, 1946, p.415.

Gandhi's movement of non-violence and *satyagraha* was not a negative force but a positive contribution to the preservation of the country's social fabric. What with the political frustration, the war had the most unsettling effect on men's minds. It became much easier for the revolutionary parties to secure recruits for their subversive cause, especially among the educated youngmen. When the war broke out, there was a great stir among the Sikhs in America and the Ghadr organisation set on foot a campaign for their return to India to provoke a revolution. Younger men were more readily susceptible to such patriotic propaganda. The way of the moderates was unacceptable to them since it gave no scope for the full play of their energy and enthusiasm. Gandhi's political philosophy, the basis of which was action, supplied this vital need and thus saved the country from violence and chaos. In his celebrated article, entitled *The Doctrine of the Sword*, written in 1920, the Mahatma declared that his creed of non-violence was not the philosophy of the weak and the timid, but the weapon of the strong and the resolute. 'Strength does not come,' he observed, 'from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.' He proclaimed his preference for violence to cowardice, but expressed his supreme confidence in the power of non-violence, as 'forgiveness is more manly than punishment.' In a memorable passage, he announced the testament of his faith thus: 'Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute....The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law — to the strength of the spirit.' He, therefore, appealed to the 'school of violence' to give a trial to his non-violent but dynamic philosophy before striving to push the country into the abyss of violence and anarchy. His plea was heard and violence, as an organised movement, never again plagued India's political progress. 'In fact,' writes an authority, 'he may be said to have kept Indian opinion on the constitutional path, for his campaigns against government were so closely related to moral principle that they may be considered *extra* rather than *anti*-constitutional. He brought

in the moral law to supplement rather than supplant official law, and thus saved India during the British period from large-scale terrorism, massacre, and race-hatred.'[35]

The Mahatma sought to win invincibility for his movement by promoting national unity. No Indian since the days of Akbar laboured so hard or so sincerely to bring the great Hindu and Muslim communities together. At the risk of antagonizing his own co-religionists — and he eventually ended his life as a martyr — he repeatedly offered a blank cheque to the Muslims without waiting to know their price for participating in his non-violent revolution. It was, however, unnecessary for him to adopt this desperate expedient. Patriotic Muslims — and their number was not insignificant — neither desired nor demanded any *quid pro quo* for doing their duty to their motherland. The steadfast loyalty and support of the Red Shirts of the North-West Frontier Province, an overwhelmingly Muslim area, under the inspiring leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, ensured that the movement of both Mahatma Gandhi and its sponsoring body was basically national. Moreover, no inducement on the part of the Congress or the Mahatma could have persuaded the bigots to join the organisation and share its trials and tribulations when the Government's policy towards their community was one of ill-concealed appeasement.

Gandhi's championship of the Khilafat movement, while it did him honour as a devoted friend of the Muslims, was, therefore, hardly worth the effort and the sacrifice which it involved. The agitation would perhaps have been more appropriate in the mediaeval times than in the modern. A rational appreciation of the movement would have revealed its essential untenability. First, India, whose urgent concern was to win independence for herself, could not justifiably claim a voice in shaping the destiny of a distant country. Secondly, there was an obvious inconsistency in the movement, for by fighting willingly and vali-

[35]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.765.

antly against the Turks, Indian Muslim soldiers contributed in no small measure to the dismemberment of the Turkish empire. Thirdly, the Sultan of Turkey was regarded as the embodiment of reaction and obscurantism and his own people desired and worked for the destruction of his throne and dynasty, including his spiritual office. Patriotic Turks deeply resented their country being known as the 'sickman of Europe' — an obloquy earned by it entirely on account of its Sultans. Fourthly, the plea for the restoration of Turkey to her full pre-war status really meant championing the cause of tyranny and imperialism, for it would have involved the reimposition of her yoke on the liberated Arabs and Armenians and the rendition of Palestine, Syria, Thrace and the Dardanelles. Kemal Ataturk, however, clinched the issue by abolishing the sultanate in 1923 and the Khalifate in the following year and by declaring Turkey a Republic. How Indian Muslims felt about these historic developments was wholly irrelevant, but the happenings in Turkey caused them to 'return to Indian horizons and communal politics.'[36] The reckless *hijrat* or emigration of 18,000 Muslims in August 1920 and their repulse by the Afghan authorities and the fanatical uprising of the Moplahs of Malabar in the following year demonstrated what unpredictable dangers lay hidden in a religious movement, especially when it involved the highly inflammable elements of the community.

Inevitably, the civil disobedience movement of 1921-22, which had been launched almost entirely to seek redress for Muslim grievances over the Khilafat, failed to achieve most of the goals set before it, but it served the great purpose of causing wide-spread political awakening in the country It also taught the value of fostering national enterprises by vigorously propagating the message of *swadeshi* The withdrawal of bigoted Muslims both from the Congress and its movement facilitated the pursuit of the national objective with greater vigour and determination, undeflected by extraneous considerations such as the

[36]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.793.

religious susceptibilities of its half-hearted adherents. In fact, the success of Gandhi's campaigns did not depend upon the predilections of any section of the population. Their appeal was to the masses and their strategy open and unconquerable. The Mahatma did not regard it as a defeat to himself or to his followers when he called off the civil disobedience movement following the mob violence at Chauri Chaura in February 1922 He sometimes over-emphasised the magnitude of such lapses and taking the blame for their occurrence upon himself, publicly denounced himself as having committed a 'Himalayan blunder.' Gandhi's address to the Court during his trial following his arrest on March 10, 1922 is a noteworthy episode in the history of this country. Referring to mob outbursts, he declared: 'I know that my people have sometimes gone mad; I am deeply sorry for it......I am here, therefore, to invite and submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.' He welcomed the award of six years imprisonment as a well-deserved punishment!

By personal example, by incessant preachings through the columns of his weeklies and by organising regional and national civil disobedience movements from time to time, Gandhi prepared and qualified the country to regain its lost heritage of national independence. Such frequent mass upheavals formed what has been described as a 'psychological watershed in the development of modern India.' It has sometimes been asked whether the Gandhian strategy of fostering a spirit of defiance among the "unthinking millions" was good in the abiding interests of India. Before the advent of British rule, it is pointed out, the country had long been exposed to the horrors of anarchy and misrule. Only during the short spell of its apprenticeship to foreign government had it learnt the value of the rule of law. Was it wise on the part of Gandhi and the Congress to revive the 'spirit of lawlessness' among the people when it had been such a marked feature of the country's history in the pre-British period? This is not a

spurious argument and it cannot, therefore, be treated lightly Lawlessness is the mortal enemy of civilization and should not be countenanced on any account. But Gandhi did not preach chaos nor did he want anarchy in the country. His movement was based on an enlightened defiance of Authority on specific issues and for specific purposes. The religious and political codes of every civilized country sanction the overthrow of an unpopular or tyrannical government. The great Chinese sage Mencius says: 'If the ruler considers the people as blades of grass, then the people will consider their ruler as a robber or enemy.' This is as it should be, for otherwise there would be no escape from subjection and tyranny.

Moreover, the critics of the Gandhian philosophy have not indicated how else India could have won her freedom They certainly do not endorse violent methods, for apart from their own revulsion for bloodshed, they know that violence can always be countered, as indeed it was, by greater frightfulness. The other alternative, namely, constitutional agitation, was tried for many decades and, far from advancing the country's interests, it deepened the national frustration thus paving the way for terrorism which would probably have gained greater ascendency over the minds of the youth, with all its frightful consequences if Gandhi had not intervened. In the official publication *India in 1921-22,* Professor Rushbrook Williams wrote: 'The time has not yet arrived to write an epitaph of the non-co-operation movement.'[37] The Professor's impatience, though understandable, was unwarranted. Such a necessity did not and could not arise till Gandhi fulfilled his mission of restoring to India her great heritage. There is, however, no doubt that none of the methods of direct action employed and popularised by him are needed any more. Their necessity and usefulness ceased with the advent of freedom to the country. In the India of to-day, the gospel of Satyagraha is indeed the 'grammar' of anarchy'

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[37]Rushbrook Williams L. F, *INDIA IN 1921-22* (Government of India Report prepared for presentation to the British Parliament), Government Printing Press, Calcutta, p.109.

and must be sternly discountenanced. Goethe once said: 'I would rather commit an injustice than suffer disorder.' Gandhi, had he still been with us, would have expressed himself in the same categorical terms.

Like Minto, Chelmsford has won a place in the history of India on account of the association of his name with the constitutional proposals for the country. The Morley-Minto reforms were discovered to be totally inadequate, especially after India's enormous contribution to the first world war. In July 1916, Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, denounced the system of the Indian administration in the House of Commons as 'too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view.' In the same year, the Lucnow Pact, representing the joint efforts of the Congress and the Muslim League, produced a reform scheme designed to give Indians a more effective voice in the government of their country. Recognising the necessity for taking note of India's political aspirations, Montagu made what has been described as the historic announcement of August 20, 1917. He said that the policy of the British Government was '*that of the increasing* association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.' Montagu added that progress in that direction could only be achieved by successive stages and that the Government 'must be judges of the time and measure of each advance.' Again, future progress would depend entirely upon the 'co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility.'

This weighty document, written in such stately prose, bore the stamp of the penmanship of Lord Curzon whose attitude towards Indian aspirations was well-known. But the authorship of the announcement was of no great im-

portance and it would certainly have deserved India's grateful acceptance, if it had contained, though not the substance, at least the germs of self-rule. Sir Thomas Holderness, former Permanent Under Secretary to India, wrote that the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals, based on the August declaration, invited comparison with the famous Durham Report on Canada. The Durham scheme was not a full-fledged Dominion constitution for Canada, but it indubitably furnished a 'habitable posting house' towards freedom. If it could be-said of the Montford reforms that they too were a prelude to Dominion Status, the course of Indian history would have been entirely different. India would certainly have worked the reforms if they had defined the goal as Dominion Status, for, as Sir George Schuster has pointed out, Dominion Status 'is also the status of the United Kingdom'[38] Indeed, she would have felt herself amply rewarded if her apprenticeship to Britain and her immense sacrifices for the sake of her overlord's safety, prosperity and greater glory had led to this happy consummation at the proper time.

Montagu visited India in the autumn of 1917 and interviewed a multitude of people to ascertain their hopes and aspirations. Princes and politicians and men who chose to 'crawl on their bellies,' including a picturesque personality with a magnificent moustache twirled to all points of the compass, called on the Secretary of State to give him the benefit of their views. In collaboration with Chelmsford, whom he mercilessly castigated in his Diary as being 'prejudiced, cold, aloof and reserved,' he produced a Report in June 1918 setting forth the measures to be adopted for India's constitutional progress. Both the Secretary of State and the Viceroy recognised that the 'spirit of liberty was abroad and active' in India and that something more than the ineffective Morely-Minto scheme was necessary to satisfy the Indian demand. They, however, began with two postulates, namely, that 'complete responsibility for the government cannot be given immediately without in-

[38]Schuster Sir George and Wint, Guy, *INDIA AND DEMOCRACY*, Macmillan, 1941, p. 332, footnote

viting a breakdown' and that 'some responsibility must be given at once if our scheme is to have any value.' Their proposals, the salient features of which will be noticed in the following paragraphs, were to set up a novel form of government in the provinces known by a newly-coined word and popularized by the well-known publicist, Lionel Curtis, 'the apostle of imperial unity.' The Government at the Centre was left untouched by the reforms.

Under the Act of 1919, the provinces became the domain in which 'the earlier steps towards the progressive realisation of responsible government' were taken. Like the public and private sectors of a country's economy, the governments of the provinces were divided into two parts. One wing of the administration consisted of the Governor and his Councillors who formed the Executive Council and held undivided responsibility for what were called the 'Reserved subjects.' The departments comprising this group were land revenue and laws, justice, the police, irrigation and labour matters. The other section of the government was controlled by the popular ministers under whom were placed the 'transferred subjects' comprising local self-government, education, public health, public works, agriculture and co-operative societies. The arrangement put the ministers in a really invidious position. Their sphere of action and their jurisdiction were strictly limited to their own portfolios, but even there they could not accomplish much, since the resources made available to them were almost invariably inadequate. Moreover, no minister could expect to function effectively by initiating and embarking upon new projects, except with the consent of the Governor whose reserve powers always hung over the heads of ministers like the sword of Damocles.

Madras was claimed to have made a great success of the new reforms. The claim was, however, falsified by the lamentations of a prominent Minister, Sir K. V. Reddi, over the utter futility of his office. 'I am,' cried Reddi, 'a Minister of Development minus forests. I am Minister of Industries without factories, which are a reserved subject,

and industries without factories are unimaginable. I am Minister of Agriculture without Irrigation......'[39] The Governor and his Executive Council were the real repositories of power and the ministers were brought into the administrative arena merely as the show-boys of a truly irresponsible government. Their anomalous position has been best described by the Simon Commission which says: 'The position of Ministers is that they are members of the Executive Government, but not members of the Executive Council.' It was futile to expect the two wings to work together on the basis of collective responsibility, when one of them had no responsibility at all.

Again, the reforms stood discredited by their failure to win the support of the Congress, which alone could deliver the goods on behalf of the Indian people. The Congress boycott of the elections held in November 1920 and its refusal to enter the new Councils stimulated an unseemly scramble for seats and positions. Ministers incurred popular odium, not only for not following in the footsteps of the nationalists, but also for associating themselves with an irremovable and irresponsible executive. With the Congress keeping itself away, the Governors were often tempted to pick up their ministers from the opposing and self-seeking groups — tendency which further threw the reforms into obloquy. Rightly has an authority said: 'Compromising coalitions usually produce loaves and fishes for the politicians rather than bread for the multitude.'[40]

At the Centre, the Imperial Legislative Council was replaced by a bicameral legislature composed of a Legislative Assembly and a Council of State. The Assembly consisted of 106 elected and 40 nominated members. Among the latter, 25 were official members. The 'Lower House' sat for three years. The Council of State, with its 61 members, commanded an unofficial majority and was elected

[39]Mehta Asoka and Patwardhan Achyut, *THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE IN INDIA*, Kitabistan, 1942, pp.69, 70

[40]*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.791.

for five years. It was given a character distinct from that of the Legislative Assembly to ensure that only privileged persons such as wealthy property-owners could qualify for its membership. The reforms enfranchised five million persons for provincial councils, nearly one million for the Legislative Assembly and a mere 17,000 'discreet persons,' for the Council of State. The system of dyarchy was not extended to the Central executive which, as before, was given complete statutory immunity from popular control. The legislature was thus powerless to enforce its decisions on the Government. The special powers conferred on the Viceroy and the Governors, to be exercised in the event of an emergency or when the legislatures became assertive rendered the constitutional basis of the reforms a mere make-believe. The evil of communal representation was extended, notwithstanding Montagu's frequent fulminations against it. Besides segregating the Muslims from the general electorates, separate constituencies were carved out for the Sikhs in the Punjab, for the Indian Christians in Madras and for the Anglo-Indians and Europeans in certain provinces. Thus, the Montford Reforms did not represent any significant forward step towards self-government and certainly did not concede India's right to independent nationhood. Indeed, at no time during the whole tenure of British rule in India was the Centre controlled effectively by popular representatives. That great day came only along with national independence.

It is impossible to call into question the correctness of this analysis. It was 'axiomatic' to none other than the joint authors of the reforms themselves that India could never qualify herself to take her place among the self-governing units of the British Commonwealth. Even if she fulfilled all their impossible stipulations, she would still not be entitled to a democratic constitution as it was ordained that nothing could supersede the 'need for securing Imperial responsibilities.'[41] Birkenhead, a shining light of British Conservative politics and Secretary of

[41]*REPORT ON INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS (MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REPORT)*, 1918, p.220.

State for India (1924-28), wrote to Lord Reading, Chelmsford's successor, confiding that the Montford Reforms were strongly opposed by him in the British Cabinet. 'To me,' he wrote, 'it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government.'[42] In a speech in the House of Lords, Birkenhead declared: "I am not able, in any foreseeable future, to discern a moment when we may safely, either to ourselves or India, abandon our trust. There is, my Lords, no 'lost Dominion,' there will be no 'lost Dominion' until that moment, if ever it comes, when the whole of British Empire with all that it means for civilization, is splintered in doom."[43] It is perfectly easy to quote endlessly on these lines from other equally authoritative sources, but it is useless to labour the obvious. One more reflection may, however, be recorded. It was not only the policy-makers that were opposed to India's freedom, but their officials also shared their revulsion in full measure. Even the feeble Montford reforms frightened and infuriated the no-changers, who felt that the statute would be used to lever them out of the country. Sir C. Y. Chintamani, who had intimate personal knowledge of the working of dyarchy, wrote. 'I know of no class of men who are more skilled than the permanent officials in defeating reform in detail.'[44]

The new Central legislature, described by *India in 1921-22*, an annual report of the Government of India prepared by Prof. Rushbrook Williams, as the 'Indian Parliament,' was formally inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught on February 9, 1921. On the occasion, the Duke recalled how since his arrival in India he had felt around him 'bitterness and estrangement between those who have been and should be friends.' He conceded that the shadow of Amritsar had lengthened over the 'fair face of India' and, as an 'old friend' of this country, appealed to both the

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[42]*FREDERICK EDWIN EARL OF BIRKENHEAD.* The Last Phase, By his son The Earl of Birkenhead, Vol. II, T Butterworth, 1935, p 245.
[43]Ibid, p 248
[44]Chintamani Sir C Y, *INDIAN POLITICS SINCE THE MUTINY*, G Allen & Unwin, 1940, p 30.

Indians and the British 'to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive, and to join hands and to work together to realise the hopes that rise from to-day.' These are noble words, but they were singularly ineffective in solving the Indian problem, which could be dealt with only on the basis of Mahatma Gandhi's famous letter to the Duke in February. 'We desire,' declared the Mahatma, 'to live on terms of friendship with Englishmen, but that friendship must be the friendship of equals, both in theory and in practice.' There was, of course, no response to this plea

The princes were also given a forum called the Chamber of Princes which was inaugurated by the Duke on February 8, 1921. Addressing a large concourse of grandly bedecked Rajas, Maharajas and Nawabs, His Royal Highness reminded them that the King-Emperor was 'mightier than even the Moghul emperors' and that his policies were framed with such a 'breadth of vision' that it was vain to look for their like in the past ages. There is no doubt that from the princes' point of view the establishment of the Chamber was a forward step. It became their meeting-place where they could deliberate upon their common problems. But the reform in no way benefited their subjects who continued to suffer from the vagaries of personal rule. The Chamber was a mere deliberative and consultative body and could not be expected to accomplish much. It was, however, soon converted into a citadel of princely reaction and obscurantism and, as we shall see in the next chapter, played an active part in presenting a formidable-looking case on behalf of the princely Order before the Butler Committee in defence of its august members' privileges and prerogatives.

Chelmford's term of Viceroyalty came to an end with the prorogation of the reformed Councils. His was indeed an extraordinarily eventful term.[45] But his own contribution

[45]In Afghanistan, Habibulla was assassinated and was succeeded by Amanulla Khan. In 1919 the new ruler waged a brief but abortive war against the British in India.

to the events was either commonplace or negative. Some writers have lamented that he has not received his full meed of praise and appreciation. Perhaps, this deficiency can be best met by re-writing the history of his time. Till then the verdict on him as the man who watched mighty happenings with unseeing eyes will remain. Chelmsford was followed by Lord Reading who took charge of the Indian administration when the country was still in great turmoil.

11. *LORD IRWIN*

Lord Reading, who arrived in India in April 1921, was one of the most brilliant rulers of this country. He had a keen and subtle intellect, of which he made the best use both as the Attorney General and the Chief Justice of England. His term as ambassador to the United States had given him a deeper insight into the art of diplomacy, besides enlarging his already broad mental horizons. He was Lloyd George's choice for the Indian Viceroyalty, which led to the postponement of Lord Willingdon's selection for the post. With his natural astuteness, Reading discovered that the best service he could render to his country and empire was to preserve and strengthen the *status quo* in India. His conversations with her political leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mrs. Annie Besant, C. F. Andrews and Lala Lajpat Rai, soon after his arrival in the country, did not deflect him from his resolution to resist the nationalists' demand for constitutional progress. He saw no scope for compromise on this vital issue.

Reading, like many of his predecessors and successors, failed to realise that it was no longer possible to take India for granted. How mistaken and ill-advised his beliefs and preconceptions were became painfully evident during the visit of the Prince of Wales to the country. In the prevailing temper of political India, the visit was both unfortunate and inopportune. The presence of the Duke of Connaught in their midst a little earlier had given ample opportunities to the loyalists to lavish their adulation on British royalty. A repetition of the performance so soon after this display was apt to provoke wide-spread resentment in the country. "I have no manner of doubt," declared Mahatma Gandhi on October 27, 1921, "that the Prince's visit is being exploited for advertising the 'benign' British rule in India." The royal visitor's arrival in Bom-

bay on November 17, gave the signal for a country-wide protest which caused considerable surprise and consternation to the bureaucracy. In Bombay, the *hartal* drifted into a bloody conflict between the co-operating few and the non-co-operating many. Calcutta's demonstration astonished the opponents of Indian nationalism and provoked the comment whether the city had in fact been surrendered to the seditious nationalists! Reading and his advisers felt deeply affronted and hit back with all the truculence of an exasperated Authority. The trek of the nationalists to prison, which began as a trickle, soon swelled into a torrent, carrying as many as 30,000 non-co-operators within the next few months. Except Mahatma Gandhi, front rank leaders like C. R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose from Bengal and the two Nehrus from Uttar Pradesh, were sent to jail, most of them for short terms.

The vigour and the spontaneity of the movement appalled and frightened the Viceroy whose cable to the Secretary of State bore abundant evidence of the seriousness of the situation. The communication conceded that the unrest was 'engendered and sustained by nationalist aspirations' and that, besides gaining a hold on the urban areas, it had begun to penetrate the countryside. Lord Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, was even more outspoken. He said: 'He (Gandhi) gave us a scare Gandhi's was the most colossal experiment in world history, and it came within an inch of succeeding.'[1] To pave the way for the Prince's peaceful reception, Reading adroitly, though belatedly, attempted to mollify Gandhi by promising various political concessions. Arriving early in Calcutta to receive the Prince there on December 24, he initiated talks with the political leaders at the instance of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the then Law Member.[2] Pandit Malaviya, to whom the Viceroy disclosed his plan, agreed to try and secure Gandhi's *imprimatur* to it. Reading promised to hold a

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[1]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, p 79

[2]Jayakar M R, *THE STORY OF MY LIFE*, Vol. I, Asia Publishing House, 1958-59, p 504.

Round Table Conference at an early date to formulate a scheme of constitutional progress, envisaging complete autonomy for the provinces and dyarchy at the Centre. Malaviya won the powerful support of Das to the scheme. Both Das and Maulana Azad sent an appeal to Gandhi to agree to the Viceroy's proposals The pressure that was brought to bear on the Mahatma was indeed great and he knew that the entire blame for the future travails of the country would be thrown upon him if he declined the offer. Nevertheless, he refused to consider the Viceroy's overtures, unless they carried an assurance that the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs would be duly redressed. He also asked for similar commitments on the issue of self-government. As was to be expected, the counter-offer was turned down by the Viceroy. Subhas Chandra Bose writes that Das was 'beside himself with anger and disgust' at Gandhi's so-called obstinacy which, he affirms, was regarded by many Congressmen as a 'serious blunder.'[3]

Subsequent events as well as the behaviour of Reading did not sustain either the charge against the Mahatma or the optimism of his critics. First, no Viceroy, however distinguished and influential, could arrogate to himself the right of making any changes in the basic structure of the Indian constitution when it had been devised by an Act of Parliament. The Viceroy was merely an agent of the British Government charged with the responsibility of administering the country on the lines prescribed by the statute. Reading enjoyed no superior position to entitle him to make promises that were obviously incapable of fulfilment. Indeed, the type of constitution promised by him was far too 'radical' to gain the acceptance of the home authorities. It never came into existence throughout the British connection with this country. In reality, the Viceroy's offer was no more than a clever manoeuvre for freeing himself from a difficult and embarrassing situation into which he had landed himself and his Government by his disdainful attitude towards the Congress.

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[3]Bose Subhas Chandra, *THE INDIAN STRUGGLE*, Thacker Spink, 1948, p.101.

Secondly, though less bellicose than men like Curzon, Kitchener and Birkenhead, Reading was as convinced an imperialist as any of them. During the debate in the House of Lords on his successor, Lord Irwin's famous announcement of October 1929, he declared that it was idle to use words like Dominion status that would not convey a clear meaning to India or to anyone in England. The use of that phrase, he warned, would lead Indian politicians to press for concessions which the Government was unable to concede. Reading's influence upon some of his contemporaries, themselves by no means distinguished for their progressive outlook, was decisive. Irwin (later Lord Halifax) records that Sir John Simon's reactionary attitude towards India was largely influenced by Reading. He says: 'A little later, again to my surprise, his (Simon's) position changed on both points, and I have always surmised that he was much influenced by Reading.'[4] Diehard opinion which, of course, included that of Reading and Birkenhead, 'was outraged that anyone should venture to speak about India reaching Dominion status, when she could neither accommodate her own internal communal differences nor defend herself against external menace'.[5] As we shall see in the ensuing chapter, Sir Samuel Hoare (later Lord Templewood) laboured indefatigably for many long and weary years to produce an empty tome in the shape of the Government of India Act of 1935. He yielded to none in his adherence to the Imperial idea and yet even this man's views alarmed Reading. He was, says a writer, rumoured to have confessed in a moment of indiscreet alarm: 'Sam Hoare, you know, is too much the Radical for me!'[6]

Such was the man who presided over the destiny of India for five fateful years. If indeed he had been earnest about his December offer, Reading would most certainly have accepted the plea, put forward in January 1922 by a representative gathering of Indian leaders, for ending the poli-

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[4]Halifax Earl of, *FULLNESS OF DAYS*, Collins, 1957, pp 117, 118.
[5]Ibid, p.121.
[6]Campbell-Johnson Alan, *VISCOUNT HALIFAX*, I. Washburn, 1941, p 227.

tical deadlock. Instead, he tried to defeat the Congress agitation by seeking out and exploiting what a writer calls the inherent disharmonies in the movement. He ignored Gandhi's intimation to start civil disobedience at Bardoli in Gujarat as a counter-measure against the Government's obstinate refusal to concede the Indian demand. The unexpected outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura, a village near Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh, on February, 5, resulting in the death of twenty-one policemen and a sub-inspector, caused deep revulsion to the Mahatma who peremptorily cancelled the proposed mass movement at Bardoli. His *action infuriated his less fastidious followers, including* Jawaharlal Nehru, who asked: "Must we train the three hundred and odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward?" In a persuasive reply, Gandhi sought to pacify his disconsolate lieutenant by assuring him that 'the cause will prosper by this retreat.' At a meeting of the party held in Delhi in the last week of February, Dr. Moonje, the militant Hindu leader, moved a vote of censure against the Mahatma for so abruptly calling off the movement.

Reading found the time most opportune for striking at Gandhi. He was arrested on March 13 on a charge of sedition and, as we saw in the previous chapter, sentenced to a long term of imprisonment by Broomfield, District and Sessions Judge of Ahmedabad. He did not, however, remain long in prison and was released on February 5, 1924, following an emergency operation for appendicitis performed by Colonel Maddock on January 12. The duress of the Mahatma led to many unexpected results. A wing of the Congress. led by Das and Motilal Nehru, urged the creation of a 'second front' against the Government by storming the 'reformed' legislatures and, since Council entry was regarded with profound distaste by the so-called no-changers, comprising Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari, the Bengal leader formed a new party called the Swaraj party. In a manifesto, published on October 14, 1923, the Swaraj party pilloried the Government for its obstinacy and unresponsiveness to the popular aspirations

and declared its resolve to assert in the legislature 'the right of the people of India to control the existing machinery and system of government.' The suppression of the Congress thus led to a new development that became disconcerting both to the bureaucracy and the elements that believed in loyal co-operation with the Government. In the general elections held towards the end of 1923, the Swarajists captured 45 seats of the Central legislature and, in collaboration with Jinnah's Independents, comprising some 20 to 25 members, became the most formidable opposition party in the Assembly. They gathered sufficient strength in Bombay and Bengal to prevent the formation of ministries. The party also acquired great ascendancy in the legislatures of the Central Provinces and the United Provinces, but its success in Madras, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa was less spectacular.

The Swarajists were provided ample opportunities to expose the hollowness of the so-called popular assemblies The doubling of the salt tax in 1923 by the exercise of the Viceroy's powers of certification after the rejection of the increase by the Legislative Assembly had proved beyond a shadow of doubt even before the advent of the new party that on issues regarded as vital by the Government the verdict of the legislatures carried no weight whatsoever with the bureaucracy. Motilal Nehru's amended motion in 1924 for convening a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme of 'full responsible government' for India evoked a vehement protest from the Home Member, Sir Malcolm Hailey, who declared that the proposal was impracticable since it ignored the need for reconciling so many conflicting interests. He called attention to the problem of princely states and wondered whether the princes would agree to have dealings with an 'executive government which is entirely responsible to an Indian legislature.' Hailey did not, of course, forget the minority communities, European commerce and the services. Evidently, the most effective means of escaping these problems was to perpetuate the *status quo*! The appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Mud-

diman in 1924 to examine the working of the reforms merely ended in disclosing the distance that separated the official and the non-official opinion on the issue of constitutional reforms without offering any solution to the problem. While the majority of the Committee was content with recommending minor amendments, the minority, led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, declared that dyarchy was unworkable. In any case, no major changes in the Act of 1919 were countenanced by the Labour Secretary of State, Lord Olivier, who held as firmly as his Conservative predecessor that no constitutional reforms could be considered until a full inquiry had made out a case for them. Two years later, in March 1926, the Swarjists staged a walk-out from the Assembly on the ground that the repeated pleas of the nationalists for political advance were being stubbornly resisted by the Government. Recalling that his party had entered the legislature 'to offer our co-operation, non-co-operators as we are, if you care to co-operate with us,' its leader, Motilal Nehru, admitted 'failure to achieve our objects in this House.' He warned the Government that if it failed to bestir itself betimes, the whole country would be "honeycombed" with anarchical bodies.

The Swarajists, however, remained a thorn in the side of a Government that was least mindful of its obligations towards the legislature. The election of Vithalbhai Patel in August 1925 as the President of the Assembly, which office he held with rare distinction till his resignation in April 1930,[7] invested the proceedings of this body with unusual interest. President Patel bore little resemblance to his younger brother Sardar Patel. He was stout, shrewd, witty and white-bearded and was, to quote George Slocombe, 'a born negotiator, a man of peace and conciliation, a political lawyer, a man of wig and robe.'[8] Nevertheless, he never succumbed to the seductions of his office and retained an exclusive and fierce passion for his coun-

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[7]He was elected by 58 votes to 56 and was unanimously re-elected in January 1927.

[8]Slocombe George, *THE TUMULT AND THE SHOUTING*, Macmillan, 1936, p 380.

try till his resignation. He once confided to a friend that his attitude in the Assembly was regulated by the knowledge that 'reasonableness will be misunderstood as subservience even when it is honest.'[9] His masterful personality and his fearless rulings created a profound impression both inside the House and throughout the country and helped to sustain popular enthusiasm for the national cause when there was no civil disobedience movement to engross the country's attention.

Reading's term of office was thus marked by popular unrest and upheaval, to the mitigation of which his own contribution was nothing. He, however, made his regime memorable by exposing the pretensions of the princely states about their so-called sovereignty. Raising the Berar issue, the Nizam of Hyderabad had written to him claiming that the subject had become a controversy between 'the two Governments that stand on the same plane without any limitations of subordination of one to the other.' The contention that Hyderabad was of the same standing as the Paramount Power was manifestly absurd and ignored the whole range of historical facts. 'The sovereignty of the British Crown,' declared Reading with devastating finality in his reply of March 27, 1926, 'is supreme in India and therefore no ruler of an Indian state can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing.'[10]

Lord Irwin arrived in India soon after his predecessor's decisive declaration about the unhindered sovereignty of the British in this country. Irwin, like Ripon, could not accomplish much in India and yet, as the latter did, he succeeded in capturing the imagination of the Indian people and in riding on the crest of popular esteem. His geniality and gentleness, his high sense of rectitude, his simple humanity and his unassuming sense of humour won for him the friendship and confidence of even his most uncom-

[9]Patel Gordhanbhai I, *VITHALBHAI PATEL· LIFE AND TIMES*, Vol. II, R A Moramkar, 1950, p 689.

[10]*REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATES COMMITTEE*, 1928-29, Appendix II, p.56.

promising political opponents. India knew that she was dealing with a gentleman and a good Christian.

Irwin's arrival in India synchronised with savage communal rioting in Calcutta. For six weeks carnage and chaos reigned supreme in the city, taking a heavy toll of life and causing extensive damage to property. Commenting on the communal bickerings, the new Viceroy appealed to the people of the country 'in the name of Indian national life and of religion' to return to the path of sanity and to 'rescue the good name of India from hurt which the present discords inflict upon it.' Unfortunately, communal strife had by now become a familiar feature of India's political life. On December 23, 1926, Swami Shraddhananda, a great social and religious reformer and patriot, was foully murdered by a Muslim fanatic. Two years before, communal conflict had raged in many parts of the country like a pestilence, sacrificing scores of lives at the altar of religious fanaticism. There were riots in Delhi, Gulburga, Nagpur, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Allahabad, Jubbalpore and Kohat. The outbreak of violence in the last-named place in September was noteworthy for its ferocity and extorted the humiliating admission by the nationalists that it 'really broke the backbone of India.' Gandhi was distraught by such madness and in September 1924 went on twenty-one days' fast in the hope of shocking the two communities into civilized behaviour. The salutary effect produced by his self-inflicted suffering was, however, transitory, for the root of the communal strife was much too deep to be eradicated by such measures.

As pointed out in an earlier chapter, Hindu-Muslim discord was many centuries old and had plagued the relations of the two communities long before the coming of the British to this country. As far back as 1807, Metcalfe recorded that a communal clash occurred in Delhi on June 16 of that year because the Muslims of the city resented a religious procession organised by a Hindu banker. The cry 'Islam in danger' was raised in defence of their aggression. Metcalfe had a similar disconcerting experience when he was in the Punjab to negotiate a treaty of friend-

ship with Ranjit Singh. His Muslim camp-followers and the Akalis came into violent conflict during the Mohrum festival and worse calamity was averted by the intervention of both the Maharaja and Metcalfe.[11] In 1809, there was a long drawn out conflict between the Hindus and Muslims of the holy city of Banaras, the streets of which were besmirched with blood over an ancient dispute.

Such fratricidal quarrels were not instigated by the British, but under their rule the conflicts became more frequent and serious since sectarian and separatist demands were encouraged to range themselves against the country's political aspirations. The fear that the Muslim minority would be overwhelmed by the Hindus in a free India was a mere bogey and, if past history, the composition of the Hindu community and its record for tolerance were any guide, such apprehensions were entirely baseless. In the pre-British period, serious communal antagonisms were resolved, not with stones and sticks or in the streets, but with swords and firearms on the fields of battle—perhaps a more rational way of settling disputes than the despicable methods of stoning and stabbing the innocent and the unwary. Moreover, such conflicts never interfered with the sense of the rulers' obligations towards their subjects. For example, the security, the honour, the privileges and the confidence which the Muslims in the Vijayanagar and the Maratha Empires enjoyed are well-known. Even in the princely India under British paramountcy, the relations between the two communities were on the whole cordial

The root of the trouble, therefore, lay in the unabashed projection of sectional and separatist agitation into the country's public life—agitation that became increasingly clamant and irreconcilable as India neared the goal of freedom. The obvious remedy for the growing communal canker was to place the responsibility for the government of the country squarely on the shoulders of the Indians themselves. Such a course of action was, however, un-

[11]Kaye John William, *THE LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE OF CHARLES LORD METCALFE*, Vol. I, Richard Bentley, 1858, pp.214, 215.

thinkable to the British policy-makers who had no intention whatsoever of terminating their rule in this country within any foreseeable future. Analysing the faction fighting in India, Lord Olivier wrote in July 1926 that no one with any close acquaintance with the Indian affairs would be prepared to deny that 'on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialdom in India in favour of the Moslem community, partly on the ground of closer sympathy but more largely as a make-weight against Hindu nationalism.'[12] Such a policy, as we shall see presently, made any reconciliation between the two communities impossible, since communalism became convinced that it could gain every thing it sought without having to shed blood or tears. Indeed, it became increasingly antagonistic to the national demand. Condemning Gandhi's famous salt satyagraha of 1930, Maulana Mahomed Ali, who had played a prominent part in Congress politics before and who had been raised to the dignity of its Presidentship, declared: 'We refuse to join Mr. Gandhi, because his movement is not a movement for the complete independence of India but for making the seventy millions of Indian Musalmans dependants of the Hindu Mahasabha.'[13] It is irrelevant to enquire how the Maulana arrived at this astonishing conclusion. The Congress was convinced that such intemperate outbursts as well as the communal clashes were bound to assail the country until it won its political emancipation.

The Nehru Committee's proposals[14] of 1928 were directed towards solving both the communal and national problems and their acceptance would undoubtedly have changed the course of Indian history. It was a statesmanlike document drawn up by competent, experienced and patriotic men belonging to all the principal communities in the country.

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[12]*THE INDIAN QUARTERLY REGISTER,* 1926, Vol. II. The Annual Register Office, Calcutta, p.101.

[13]Coupland Prof. R., *THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM OF INDIA,* Oxford University Press, 1944, p.111.

[14]The Committee of which Motilal Nehru was the Chairman, consisted of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Shuaib Qureshi, M. S. Aney, M. R. Jayakar, G. R. Pradhan, Sardar Mangal Singh and N. M. Joshi, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Secretary.

The Nehru Report was not a complete constitution but it furnished a valuable framework for preparing one. The Committee could not do more, for it was not a sovereign body charged with the responsibility of formulating constitutional proposals for an independent nation. The Report, however, fully met Birkenhead's challenge to Indian leaders to produce an 'agreed scheme.'[15] On three vital issues, the Committee showed considerable realism and courage. It justified the Congress demand for *swaraj* by recommending the enfranchisement of the common man in a big way. It provided for adult suffrage forthwith which meant placing 100 million names on the register in place of the 6½ millions then enfranchised. It readily conceded the gravity of the communal problem and boldly set out to solve it. 'The only methods,' it declared, 'of giving a feeling of security are safeguards and guarantees and the grant, as far as possible, of cultural autonomy.' The Committee reiterated the universally endorsed opinion about the harmful character of communal representation and omitted this form of election in its recommendations. Instead, it provided for the reservation of seats for Muslim minorities both in the Central and the provincial legislatures in proportion to their population, with the right to contest additional seats for a period of ten years. It recognised the right of the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, both predominantly Muslim areas, to the same administrative status as the other provinces. It also endorsed the Muslim plea for the separation of Sind from the province of Bombay, although it did not approve of the arguments urged by its protagonists of communal persuasion. It had been made abundantly clear from many Muslim platforms that the creation of Sind, a Muslim-majority region, into a new province was necessary as a counterpoise to the Hindu-majority provinces. The Nehru

[15]Commenting on this episode, Halifax's biographer, Alan Campbell Johnson, writes: "Birkenhead's ponderous insolence remained with him throughout his public life, but a technique that was pure gold to the Oxford Union or for a maiden speech in Parliament was tinsel when applied to the vast theme of India."

Committee was fundamentally opposed to this obnoxious doctrine.

The Indian statesmen grasped the nettle of the princely states with equal realism and thoroughness. They did not propose to destroy the states, but refused to allow them to become a millstone round the country's neck. The Committee recommended that the rights and obligations of paramountcy over the states should devolve on the future Government of the Indian Commonwealth and envisaged a suitable machinery for adjusting the relations between the two parts of the country. 'We have made these suggestions,' the Committee declared, 'in no spirit of vanity or idealism' and expressed the confident belief that 'the Government of India of the future will discharge their obligations in their integrity and with every desire to promote harmonious relations.' It further assured the Princely Order that free India would have no desire 'to override cherished privileges or sentiments.'[16]

The Committee's proposals were designed to meet the requirements of a 'full responsible government' similar to the constitutions obtaining in the autonomous Dominions of the British Empire. 'The attainment of Dominion status,' it declared, 'is not viewed as a remote stage of our evolution but as the next immediate step.' Unfortunately, the Report failed to win the support of either the British Government or the Muslim community. On behalf of the Government, it was assailed on account of its so-called inadequacies as if it was a complete blue-print for free India. For instance, the Committee could not make detailed recommendations regarding defence, as whatever it urged could not, in the nature of things, carry the weight that would accrue to proposals coming from an officially-authorised body. The fairness of the Report could not, however, be doubted. Long after its rejection, Motilal Nehru declared that all legitimate interests, including those of the British would be duly protected in free India. Irwin was loath to support the Nehru constitution on the

[16]*THE INDIAN QUARTERLY REGISTER*, 1928, Vol. I The text of the Nehru Report is reproduced in this issue.

ground that it impinged on the exclusive right and prerogative of the British Parliament to undertake this task.[17] The *coup de grace* was given to the great document by the All-India Muslim Conference which declared on January 1, 1929 that 'no constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be acceptable to Indian Musalmans' unless it conformed to the principles embodied in the resolution adopted at the conference. The resolution contained a catalogue of separatist demands, including the 'right of Muslims to elect their representatives on the various Indian legislatures through separate electorates.' The Aga Khan presided over the Conference, with Jinnah participating in its deliberations.

Apart from the intransigence of Muslim communalism, the essay of Indians in constitution-making was foredoomed to failure, as the British Government would not have on any account divested itself of its 'right' to determine the fate of the country. Two years before the date of investigation into India's eligibility for constitutional progress fell due, Birkenhead took the precaution of appointing a Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon. Explaining his reasons for the hurry, he said that his party could not afford to run 'the slight risk that the nomination of the 1928 Commission should be in the hands of our successors.' He added: 'You can readily imagine what kind of a Commission in its personnel would have been appointed by Colonel Wedgewood and his friends.' He also decided that there should be no Indians on the Commission and was supported by Irwin in arriving at this decision[18] The Secretary of State, who dismissed India's right to self-determination as a fantastic chimera, had boundless confidence in Simon's ability to steer clear of the Indian demand Writing to the Viceroy on September 18, 1928, he expressed his confidence that, however

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[17]Gopal S, *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD IRWIN*, p. 40, Oxford University Press, 1957, p 37.

[18]Decades after the event, Halifax admitted that the exclusion of Indians from the Commission "appeared to have been a mistake" (FULLNESS OF DAYS by the Earl of Halifax, pages 114, 115)

onerous Simon's undertaking, 'the matter would not present the same difficulties to one who holds my own opinions.'

Simon would not, of course, allow his compeers to outstrip him in diehardism. The Commission, whose appointment was announced in November 1927, arrived in India in February 1928 for a preliminary investigation and to seek Indian collaboration in its undertaking. The Chairman's suggestion for a 'joint free conference' with Indian legislators was categorically rejected by the Central Legislative Assembly which refused to lend countenance to its members being used as a superfluous parenthesis in a sentence. Jinnah dismissed the Commission with indignation, exclaiming: 'The Jallianwala Baug was physical butchery. The Simon Commission is the butchery of our soul.' The visiting body was most unaccommodating. Asked for an assurance that it would not hold any *in camera* sessions if a team of Indians collaborated with it, Simon hedged by saying that such sittings would not be many. At any rate, both he and Irwin were agreed that the interviews with the Governors of provinces should be held in secret and certainly not at an open 'joint free conference.' The boycott of the alien investigators was thus inevitable.

In the face of the countrywide opposition to the Commission, it was extremely unwise on its part to persist in pretending to consult Indian opinion by getting hold of a few unrepresentative and inconspicuous men. Its second visit, which lasted from October 11, 1928 to April 13, 1929, drove the country into a minor holocaust. Many of the nation's respected leaders were insulted and man-handled by the police in an attempt to prevent the people from protesting against the intrusion of unwanted men in their midst. At Lahore, the veteran leader and patriot, Lala Lajpat Rai, who was in poor health when heading the boycott procession, was attacked by the police. His death on November 17, 1928 caused profound grief and anger to his countrymen whose state of mind has been graphically described by Jawaharlal Nehru. 'To find,' he writes in his Autobiography, 'that even the greatest of our leaders, the foremost

and the most popular man in the Punjab, could be so treated seemed little short of monstrous, and a dull anger spread all over the country, especially in north India. How helpless we were, how despicable when we could not even protect the honour of our chosen leaders!'[10] Nehru himself and Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant were subjected to such brutal and humiliating treatment.

It was one of the minor tragedies of the time that Simon, of all persons, should have been asked to preside over a body commissioned to pronounce its verdict on the country's fitness for freedom. 'I sometimes feel,' he wrote in January 1929, 'as though I had been asked to spend two years over a gigantic cross-word puzzle, with the tip whispered into my private ear that the puzzle has *no* solution.'[20] During the Gandhi-Irwin talks, he warned the Viceroy against parleying with the 'enemy.' His definition of Dominion status was uniquely his own. He asserted before Irwin that there was no essential difference between responsible government and Dominion status. 'If I go into my garden,' he explained, 'the gardener may show me a green leaf peeping through the soil, which he will, no doubt truly, tell me is the sun-flower. It is not indeed six feet tall, as it will be when fully grown; but it's not the less a sun-flower.' But Simon forgot to tell the Viceroy that the hazards to the growth of the 'leaf peeping through the soil' into a flower-bearing plant were enormous in India.

The Report of the Commission, published in May 1930, faithfully reflected the mind of its Chairman, although one cannot fail to marvel at the docile endorsement of the proposals by Clement Attlee, one of the Members of the Commission, in blissful ignorance of the historic role he was to play seventeen years later in freeing India from British rule. Not much need be written about a 'constitutional masterpiece' which became hopelessly out of date

[10] Jawaharlal Nehru: *AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*, Bodley Head, 1936, p.174.

[20] Gopal S., *THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD IRWIN*, Oxford University Press, 1957, p.28.

even before its publication. The Commission rightly execrated dyarchy and asked for its abolition in the provinces which, it urged, should be given a larger measure of autonomy. The Governor should, however, be given statutory powers to hold a tight rein over the popular ministry. He should be unfettered in taking over the administration of the province and should be clothed with further powers to 'restore rejected demands for grants, and to certify legislation if in his opinion it is essential for any interest in the province.' The provinces were thus to have a kind of guided democracy — a 'privilege' that was firmly denied to the Centre. The Commission also turned its face against the introduction of dyarchy or any other system of 'divided responsibility' in the Government of India. In fact, it refused to countenance any advance at the Centre. 'Our own view,' it declared, 'is that, until the provinces of India have established themselves, by the working of unitary Governments, as self governing units, the ultimate form which the Central Government of India will take cannot be determined.'[21] The Commission thus refused to be hustled into making proposals envisaging the country's freedom within any forseeable future. It evidently endorsed Birkenhead's sage observation: 'Wise men are not the slaves of dates, rather are dates the servants of sagacious men.' To the great mortification of Simon and his colleagues, their proposals were, however, looked askance even by their enthusiastic supporters. The Commission showed a singular lack of tact by failing to offer carrots to India's traditional loyalists. Its refusal to countenance federation even as a distant goal was regarded as a major tactical error on its part. The mistake was later rectified by both Irwin and Ramsay MacDonald, the new Labour Prime Minister. At the conclusion of the first Round Table Conference on January 19, 1931, the latter announced that 'with the legislature constituted on a federal basis,' the Government would be 'prepared to recognise the princi-

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[21]*REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATUTORY COMMISSION* (Simon Commission), Vol. II, Government of India, Calcutta, 1930, p.143 para 17.

ple of the responsibility of the executive to the legislature.' There was, as we shall see presently, no intrinsic value in this declaration, but it served the purpose of calming many a ruffled mind in India.

The relations between the Indian states and the British Government were also reviewed during Irwin's Viceroyalty. The growing pressure of nationalism had enormously increased the importance of the princes to the British Power in India. Apart from their desire to make the best use of their advantageous position, they had become genuinely alarmed at the tone and tenor of Reading's letter of March 27, 1926 to the Nizam in which he had categorically repudiated the princes' claim to sovereign status. At a conference, convened by Irwin in May 1927, the princes asked for an expert review of their relations with the paramount power — a demand that was favourably considered by the Secretary of State, Birkenhead, who, on December 16, 1927, appointed a Committee of three, presided over by Sir Harcourt Butler, for the purpose.

Before we examine the rulers' submissions and the Butler Committee's reactions to them, it would be pertinent to give a brief description of the types of Government that flourished in the so-called 'Indian India' and how they benefited their people. The states covered an area of 715,964 square miles and were inhabited by more than 93 million people. No two authorities were agreed as to the precise number of these principalities which were counted in hundreds Their preservation in such large numbers and in all their bewildering variety had, it was admitted, exceeded the expectations, and even the design, of the builders of the British Empire in India. There was, for example, little in common between such states as Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda on the one hand and the petty estates of Kathiawar on the other—the latter in fact representing a museum of insignificant principalities.

With honourable exceptions, there was one thing in common between all these multitudinous states—namely, misrule. Their rulers, who regarded their sojourn in this world as furnishing a rare opportunity for self-indulgence,

never devoted even a few fleeting moments of their time to the well-being of their subjects. There were states where tigers, horses, dogs and other animals were far more important than human beings and where 'a pretty face may be a passport to political influence.' 'Indian India,' says a writer, 'is indeed a country of lights and shades, and of many of the courts, small and great, tales might be told which would rival the Arabian Nights in vividness.'[22] Mistaking his mediocrity for genius, a Maharaja decided to hold the entire budget of his state in his head. The result was chaos. The loving care with which another ruler tended his kennels became the talk of the country. He had ninety-five dogs, mostly gun dogs, many of them champions. They were housed in wonderful quarters 'specklessly clean, with tiled walls and electric lights.' Three Englishmen were in charge of the pampered beasts for which a first-class hospital, with three wards and an operating theatre, was built. The operation theatre, says the author, 'would shame some military hospitals I have known in India.'[23] A more recent example of princely generosity to the canine fraternity was furnished by the Nawab of Junagadh who owned hundreds of dogs. His attachment to them was so original that 'he once organised a wedding of two of his pets, over which he spent a huge sum of money and in honour of which he proclaimed a State holiday!' The Nawab spent Rs. 16,000 a month on his dogs.[24] A few decades before these highly diverting happenings, a Maharaja won an enviable place in the realm of eccentricity by uniting a pair of parrots in holy wedlock with great eclat! The ruler of Dholpur was a great lover of animals and Lord Halifax in his *Fullness of Days* records: 'We often used to laugh at him for giving the tigers in a special area near his jungle palace bowls of chilled milk and frozen cheeses in the hot weather.'[25] Episodes like these, far more sensational that the *Tales from the*

[22]Barton Sir William, *THE PRINCES OF INDIA,* Nisbet, 1934, p.47.
[23]Ibid, p.135.
[24]Menon V. P., *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, 1956, pp.125, 148
[25]Halifax, Earl of, *FULLNESS OF DAYS,* Collins 1957, p.142.

Arabian Nights but true, could be quoted *ad infinitum*, but what have been cited here are sufficient to establish beyond dispute the fact that the states existed, not for the well-being of their people, but for the self-aggrandizement and glory of the Maharajas and the Nawabs and for the security of British rule in India.

No serious attempts were, therefore, made at any time to end this scandalous state of affairs. In a candid appraisal of the paramount power's responsibility for it, Prof. Keith says that the British Government made no exertions to ensure good and efficient administration in the realms of its feudatories. It is true that gross inhumanity was not tolerated, but 'very poor Government was acquiesced in freely enough.'[26] The princes had indeed no time to devote to their responsibilities as rulers, for, as one of their most ardent champions, Colonel Sir Kailas Narayan Haksar, observed, they were too busy in trying to outstrip one another 'in the race for honours and decorations' to be able to fritter away their energies on such non-essentials as good and enlightened government. 'One has watched,' wrote Sir Kailas, 'with pathetic interest the swelling breasts and gleaming eyes of those who can disport more than one row of miniatures or more than one diamond-studded star, even though the diamond be self-acquired.'[27] The vagaries and the extravagances of the princes were the subject of frequent criticisms by leading Indian personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, but the misguided and pampered fraternity never mended its ways. In his famous Cochin speech in October 1926, the Right Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri deplored that a great number of princes seldom stayed in their states. 'They are to be seen,' he declared, 'anywhere where enjoyment can be bought with their people's money. You go to London, you go to Paris, you go to all fashionable cities and you meet some Indian Raja

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[26]Keith A.B., *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA*, Methuen, 1936, pp.220, 221

[27]Haksar Sir Kailas Narayan, *THE INDIAN STATES; WHAT ABOUT THEM?* (The Twentieth Century magazine for January 1941)

or other, dazzling the people of Europe and corrupting those who go near him.'[28]

It is against this background of princely recklessness and irresponsibility and in the light of many other factors that the claim made by the rulers for a privileged position should be examined. Their case was presented before the Butler Committee by Sir Leslie Scott, who was reportedly paid the biggest fee in legal history, and his colleagues. It was urged on behalf of the princes that they enjoyed what was called a pre-existing sovereignty and that their status, following their acceptance of British paramountcy, was modified only to the extent of the surrender of some of their sovereign powers. Scott and his colleagues asserted that the relationship of the states *inter se* and to the British Government in India was 'one which an international lawyer would regard as governed by the rules of the international law.' This point of view was later supported by two German Professors who maintained that, despite the various derogations from their sovereignty, the states still 'retained their independent existence and personality and according to international law.'[29] On such an untenable basis, the princes' counsel argued that paramountcy should not be construed as a reservoir of arbitrary powers and that the relations between the states and the British Government rested strictly on mutual rights and obligations. The treaties and engagements furnished the only true foundation of the relationship and so mere custom and usage could not vary these compacts because of themselves they did not 'create any new right or impose any new obligation.' Lastly, the princes' experts declared that the relations of the states were with the Crown of England which, by virtue of its obligations to them, became irrevocably committed to the preservation of the *status quo* in

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[28]Chudgar P.L., *INDIAN PRINCES UNDER BRITISH PROTECTION*, William and Norgate, 1929, p.17.

[29]*Memorandum relating to the proposed constitution of a Federal Union of All India*, by Dr. Viktor Bruns, Professor of Law at the University of Berlin and Dr Carl Bilfinger, Professor of Law at the University of Halle; (For Private Circulation only-1930).

India. 'So the British Crown,' declared the Joint Opinion, 'cannot require the Indian States to transfer the loyalty which they have undertaken to show to the British Crown, to any third party, nor can it, without their consent, hand over to persons who are in law or fact independent of the control of the British Crown, the conduct of the states' foreign relations, nor the maintenance of their external or internal security.'[30]

These submissions were so completely divorced from historical facts and current experience that there was little difficulty in demolishing the whole series of them. It was untrue to say that the states were sovereign entities before their admission to British suzerainty or that their relations with the latter rested strictly on what was called 'paramountcy agreement' Nearly all of them were subjected to the overlordship of the Moghuls, the Marathas or the Sikhs, while their acceptance of the new relationship under the British completely extinguished even the remnants of their independent status. In fact, as an authority has pointed out, they had gained too much by the abandonment of annexation to oppose the accompanying growth of British paramountcy.[31] Actually, the princes enjoyed little more than delegated authority, the continued exercise of which depended entirely upon the volition of their overlord. The Butler Committee, therefore, launched a devastating attack on the doctrine of the paramount power's limited liability by asserting that paramountcy must always remain paramount! It also reminded the princes that British omnipotence alone ensured their continued existence. Indeed, the Indian states were *sui generis*, since the system they represented conformed neither to international nor municipal law. They were neither fish nor fowl nor even red-herring! The Committee repudiated the suggestion that custom, usage and sufferance were in themselves sterile and urged that they alone lent meaning to

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[30] *REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATES COMMITTEE* (Butler Committee), Appendix III, Government of India, 1928, p 74.

[31] *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA*, Vol VI, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p 506

the old and obsolete agreements and thus illumined their dark corners. Professor Keith, who dismissed the laboured arguments of Scott and his colleagues as betraying a 'singularly little sense of constitutional law,' pointed out the absurdity of the objection to usage and held that 'to repudiate the means by which they (the princes) had been able to live was inadmissible.'[32]

The Committee, however, readily upheld the princes' assertion that their relations were with the Crown of England, although their claim was utterly untenable both from the patriotic and practical point of view. England was able to exercise her obligations of paramountcy over the states by virtue of her also being the ruler of what was known as British India. It is indeed unthinkable that any relationship could ever have been possible between her and the states if the rest of the country had been under another government. The Committee rendered an inestimable service to its own country and empire by endorsing the princes' plea to be given the right of vetoing India's constitutional progress. 'If any government,' it observed, 'in the nature of a dominion government should be constituted in British India, such a government would clearly be a new government resting on a new and written constitution. The contingency has not arisen, we are not directly concerned with it; the relations of the states to such a government would raise questions of law and policy which we cannot now and here foreshadow in detail. We feel bound, however, to draw attention to the really grave apprehension of the princes on this score, and to record our strong opinion that, in view of the historical nature of the relationship between the Paramount Power and the princes, the latter should not be transferred without their

[32]The total number of treaties was only 40, while there were more than 500 states Moreover, not all these treaties were of the same pattern and reflected the varying degrees of the dependence of the states concerned on the Paramount Power. None of them could be regarded as having been concluded on terms of equality with the Government of the East India Company.

own agreement to a relationship with a new government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature'[33]

The passage quoted above is the meat of the Report and constitutes the basic intention of the investigation both from the British and the princes' point of view. *Vox Populi* had no place at all in such a scheme of things and the voice of the 93 million states' people went unheard. Their prayers and petitions for a share in the administration of their states were dismissed as worthy of no notice because it was fatal to the prevailing arrangement to recognise the legitimacy of their grievances. The princes in fact constituted the states. Such studied indifference to the realities of the situation led to strange developments. Although Earl Winterton had stated in 1938 on more than one occasion on behalf of the Secretary of State that the Paramount Power's permission was not required before any proposals for constitutional advance were approved by the princes in their states, the British Government's declaration of policy was not taken seriously by them. The Dewan of Travancore, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, a distinguished lawyer and a moderate politician, declared in the State's Legislative Assembly in February 1938 that legally no such step was possible 'without the active concurrence of the British Government.' In April of the following year, the Under Secretary for India clinched the issue by holding that, although a ruler could grant reforms, he was not free to divest himself of the control necessary to discharge his obligations to the Paramount Power. In the event of his transgressing these undefined and indefinable bounds, the Paramount Power would 'take such steps as might be required to ensure their fulfilment.' Thus, in the year of the Second World War, which was to be fought for the vindication of the rights and dignity of man, the Indian states, with a few exceptions, were dominated by 'little Hitlers.' The states' problem was in fact amenable to only one solution, namely, their complete dissolution

[33] *REPORT OF THE INDIAN STATES COMMITTEE* (Butler Committee), Appendix III, Government of India, 1928, pp 31 and 32, para 58.

While the princes and the communal elements were sparing no efforts to hamper the country's political progress, the forces of nationalism continued to move steadily towards the goal. The arbitrary increase in the land revenue by 22 per cent. in the Bardoli taluka in Gujarat and the decision to start collections of the enhanced levy from February 1928, infuriated the peasants of the taluka, who, under the leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel, refused to pay the assessment unless the increased imposition was withdrawn. Despite repression, which included assault and intimidation with the help of imported Pathans, confiscations of property and cattle and the adoption of many other coercive measures, the brave peasants remained adamant. The Government of Bombay eventually realised that discretion was the better part of obstinacy and on the recommendation of the two British officers who had been specially appointed to review the position, scaled down the enhanced assessment from 22 per cent. to 7 per cent. The settlement was a great triumph for the peasants of Bardoli who thenceforward became the symbol of hope and courage to their countrymen, while their exemplary behaviour and fortitude made it possible for the Gandhian non-violent movement to operate at its best.

In the legislatures, the Swarajists, in co-operation with other progressive parties, offered stubborn resistance to the Draconian measures, often compelling the Government to put them on the statute book by flouting the popular vote. The Public Safety Bill, intended ostensibly to deal with the infiltration of Communists from abroad, but actually designed to thwart the popular movements in the country, was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in September 1928, but was thrown out by the House, with President Patel exercising his casting vote for its rejection. The Bill in a more stringent form was sought to be introduced in the Assembly in February 1929, but in April the President ruled that this could not be done till the case at Meerut, where thirty-one persons stood their trial on charges identical with some of the provisions of the proposed measure,

was settled.[34] The deadlock was, however, broken by the Bill being issued as an ordinance by the Viceroy. Irwin's goodness brought no immunity to India from Government by special measures.

The fall of the Conservative Ministry and the advent of Labour to power in May 1929, with MacDonald as Prime Minister and Wedgewood Benn as Secretary of State for India, kindled the hope of this country that there would be a quickening of the pace towards political reforms. On his return from mid-term leave in England, the Viceroy announced on October 31, 1929 that he had been 'authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion status.' India felt happy about the announcement, but was anxious to ensure that the promise contained in it was really intended to be fulfilled. In a manifesto, issued soon after the Viceroy's declaration, prominent leaders, including Malaviya, Besant and Sapru, observed: 'We understand that the Conference is to meet (in London), not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion constitution for India.' In other words, there were to be no more long-drawn out debates and discussions on the fitness of India for self-determination, but a simple and straightforward move to settle the terms of her independence.

The fact that Britain had no such intention was made abundantly clear during the Parliamentary debate on India in November. Birkenhead and Reading launched a powerful attack on Irwin's October announcement and the former called on the Simon Commission, which had not yet completed its Report, 'to treat that which the Government have instructed or authorised the Viceroy to do as irrelevance.' While Baldwin withdrew his lukewarm sup-

[34]On April, 8, 1929, when the President rose to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill, two bombs fell in the Assembly injuring several persons one of them seriously. Sir John Simon was present in the President's gallery when this happened.

port for Dominion status, Simon chose to remain neutral. The Prime Minister himself, on whose authority the October promise was made, did not lift his little finger to reassure Indian opinion. The meeting of prominent leaders, — namely Mahatma Gandhi, Jinnah, Sapru and Vithalbhai Patel — with the Viceroy in the last week of December to elicit an assurance from him that the proposed Round Table Conference would be devoted to the transaction of serious business, produced no better results.[35] Irwin refused to add anything to what he had been authorised to announce. The distrust between India and England thus deepened and at its Lahore session, over which Jawaharlal Nehru presided, the Congress adopted complete independence as its political objective in place of Dominion status. All lingering hopes about the scope of his October pronouncement were extinguished by Irwin himself who, in the course of his address to the Legislative Assemblly in January 1930, declared that 'the assertion of a goal is of necessity a different thing from the goal's attainment. No sensible traveller would feel that the clear definition of his destination was the same thing as the completion of his journey.'[36] The Viceroy's language was scarcely distinguishable from that of Birkenhead who, in his wisdom, had suggested that sagacious men should not be the slaves of dates. Long after he laid down his Indian office, Halifax wrote about the 'Oriental mind' working differently from that of the West. Whatever might be the implication of this remark, surely there was no need for him to make his announcement of October 1929 with a fanfare of trumpets if all that was intended to be given to India was a post-dated cheque of doubtful genuineness.

Irwin's prevarication, the Conservative Party's open hostility to the Indian demand and the Labour Government's unresponsiveness, precipitated the famous salt *Satyagraha*. After notifying his intention to the Viceroy,

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[35]An attempt was made on December 23 to wreck the train in which Irwin was travelling to Delhi to meet the Indian leaders. He escaped unhurt.

[36]Speeches by Lord Irwin, *INDIAN PROBLEMS*, George Allen & Unwin, 1932, p 76.

Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by seventy-eight of his disciples, set out on March 12, 1930 to Dandi, a sea-side place, to break the salt laws. He reached the sea on April 5 and symbolically broke the law by picking up the salt lying on the shore. 'The spark having been ignited,' says Professor Brecher, 'in a dramatic fashion, the explosion followed with devastating effect. The pent-up emotions of thousands burst forth, and a nation-wide violation of the Salt Law followed.'[37] Long before this mighty upheaval took place, the Viceroy and his subordinates had been granted a *carte blanche* by Whitehall to deal with the national uprising in whatever drastic manner they chose. On January 17, 1930, the Labour Secretary of State, Wedgewood Benn, cabled Irwin that he had 'every confidence in your judgment and will support you fully.' The Prime Minister, as Becher points out, added a personal message of unqualified support 'Keep up moral authority of Government,' the message read, 'and rally round it those who respect law and order and whose political instincts will defend India from revolutionary movement whilst pursuing evolutionary politics.'[38]

Bureaucracy's excesses, however, frightened none. Women in their thousands discarded the security of their homes and descended into the political arena to carry out the behests of the Congress and its leader. Businessmen did not count the cost or the consequences when they chose to make common cause with their crusading countrymen Nor was organised labour daunted by the prospect of spending foodless days when tens of thousands of textile workers, especially in Bombay, walked away from their workplaces. The traditionally turbulent North-West Frontier Province excelled the rest of India by its stubborn and stoic adherence to the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. Under the guidance of their great leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Red Shirts refrained from retaliation.

[37]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU. A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 151

[38]Ibid p 152

although the provocation was often unendurable. In the police firing at Peshawar in April as many as 200 persons were killed. The non-violent fervour of the sturdy Pathans deeply moved the Indian elements of the Army posted in the province. Two platoons of the Second Battalion of 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles refused to fire on the unarmed crowds. This episode and the countrywide enthusiasm for the national cause filled the authorities with alarm. Communicating the gravity of the situation to the Secretary of State in June 1930, the Viceroy wrote that 'every European and Indian would tell you that he was surprised at the dimensions the movement had assumed,' and added 'we should delude ourselves if we sought to underrate it.' The Government of Bombay in its report to the Government of India also wrote in similar terms explaining that the 'belief that the British connection is morally indefensible and economically intolerable is gaining strength.'[39] Authority became increasingly convinced that it was no longer possible to place absolute reliance upon the loyalty of the police and the Army, the only pillars on which the British Empire in India rested.

By the end of 1930 as many as 90,000 men and women had been swept into prison. Overwhelmed by panic, the Government struck blindly and without restraint. Webb Miller has drawn a memorable picture of the scene that confronted him during the *Satyagrahis*' raid on the salt pans at Dharasana organised under the guidance of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. 'Suddenly,' writes Miller, 'at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis.' He noted that the marchers went down like 'ten-pins' under the blows, with not a single person attempting to fend them off. 'I heard,' he further observes, 'the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.'[40] The gruesome drama went on for quite some time before the

[39]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p.153.
[40]Miller Webb, *I FOUND NO PEACE*, Victor Gollancz, 1937, p.184

curtain was mercifully rung down upon it. After such happenings, it was idle to pretend that the British Government in India rested on the consent of her people. But its supporters refused to make this distasteful admission. The Government never wearied in its attempts to weaken the movement. The doctrine of divide and rule was freely invoked Besides urging that the incident relating to the Garhwali regiment's disobedience should be strictly censored, the Central Government emphasised in its instructions to the local authorities in April 1930 that it was of the 'utmost importance to maintain the attitude of opposition on the part of Mahommedans to the civil disobedience movement' Professor Brecher writes: "No better evidence of the divide-and-rule policy in 1930 is to be found than the reply of the Central Government: 'At present vital need is to find some means of winning back Muslim intelligentsia of this (North-West Frontier) Province from Congress to Central Muslim Party.'"[41]

In spite of all that happened, Gandhi, who had been arrested soon after he broke the salt laws at Dandi, was willing to come to terms with the Government on an honourable basis He was essentially a man of compromise and the fact that the Lahore Congress had committed the party to complete independence did not fetter his discretion to accept a variant of that objective if it was equally substantial His colleague, Motilal Nehru, also held this view. If it were made clear, declared Motilal, that the Round Table Conference 'would meet to frame a constitution for free India, *subject to such adjustments of our mutual relations as are required by the special needs and conditions of India and our past association*, I for one would be disposed to recommend that Congress accept an invitation to participate in the Conference' (Emphasis not mine). This, according to any test, was a reasonable offer and, instead of giving Motilal an opportunity to strive for this end, he was, to quote George Slocombe, 'dragged out of bed in the small hours of the morning like a felon,

[41]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 156.

and driven off to prison' — an action which increased his 'conviction that the authorities in India had no desire or intention to reach a friendly settlement.'[42] In such an atmosphere, the repeated efforts of the stout-hearted Liberal leaders, Sapru and Jayakar, to promote an understanding between the Congress and the Government bore no fruit.

The deadlock was, however, broken in the following year when Gandhi and Irwin held long and intimate discussions which resulted in the famous agreement of March 5, 1931. The value of the Gandhi-Irwin pact consisted, not so much in its contents, as in the fact that it brought the prolonged strife to an end, at least for the time being. Some of the provisions of the agreement, and more especially Clause 2 pertaining to constitutional discussions and safeguards, were distasteful to prominent leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru. Nevertheless, the Congress agreed to abide by the terms. The British diehards did not, however, forgive Irwin, the representative in India of the world's mightiest empire, for parleying with Gandhi, the agitator, on equal terms. It was 'nauseating and humiliating' to Churchill, described as a sublime reactionary, to find the Mahatma, 'this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor.'[43] Describing Irwin's Indian policy, Churchill said on another occasion: 'His attitude towards India has been an apology.' There were many officials in this country who were in complete accord with this verdict.[44]

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[42]Slocombe George, *THE TUMULT AND THE SHOUTING* Macmillan, 1936, p 371.

[43]Campbell-Johnson Alan, *VISCOUNT HALIFAX,* I. Washburn 1941, p.294.

[44]Edward Thompson wrote· "One thing that makes Indian affairs always a more or less permanent deadlock is what I must style racial segregation. Last October, not one European Member of the Viceroy's Council knew either Gandhi or Nehru, who are known to countless people in every civilized land. I could name many other high officials in the same case A Governor who is both able and democratic in outlook told me 'I hate the fact that I must leave India without having met either Gandhi or Nehru. I admire them greatly' " *(Enlist India for Freedom* (1940), page 43)

After the March agreement with Gandhi, Irwin's major task in India was over. He left the country in the following month, carrying with him the esteem of the Indian people. In spite of the extraordinary stresses and strains that marked the five-year period of his Viceroyalty, his personal popularity and prestige remained undiminished. Speaking to the combined Legislatures at the Centre in July 1930, he claimed: 'As I look back over the time I have spent in India, I can recall no occasion on which I have consciously sought to work for anything but India's good.' Few can dispute the validity of this claim, and there is no doubt that Irwin's stature as a good and large-hearted person would have been revealed in greater amplitude if, instead of merely making announcements on India's political goal, he had been called upon, as Lord Mountbatten was invited less than two decades later, to assist in the country's emergence to independent status and to participate in the rejoicings that accompanied the historic change. That great opportunity was denied to him, not because he was unable to grasp it, but because in his time as India's Viceroy the question of the country's freedom was not regarded as a practical proposition. It does not, therefore, detract from the essential goodness of Irwin if he could not hasten India's independence.[45]

[45]The rigidity of British policy towards India in those days called for the exercise of great caution, even when dealing with sympathetic statesmen. In this context, the following brief letter, dated November 6, 1935, from Professor Harold Laski to Jawaharlal Nehru, then in England, is illuminating "I gather that you have been pressed to see Halifax and discuss the Indian situation with him. I hope very much that you will not do so unless you have a specific written request from him. Otherwise it seems to me that there may easily be grave misrepresentation which would do great harm". (*A Bunch of Old Letters to Nehru*, (1958), page 123).

12. LORD WILLINGDON

LORD Willingdon, who succeeded Irwin in April 1931, was an old man of sixty-five. His long service in India as Governor of Bombay and Madras and the growing infirmities of his mind and body were perhaps the best recommendation for his retirement to some sylvan retreat from where he could contemplate at leisure his achievements in this country. His appointment to the Indian Viceroyalty was, however, not pre-determined. The 'injudicious' recommendation of a Socialist successor to Irwin by the Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, vastly improved the chances of Willingdon who became the King's nominee as an essentially 'safe' person. The hopes of General Smuts of South Africa, whose name was being widely canvassed, to preside over the destiny of Gandhi's India, proved illusory.

Outside the domain of politics, Willingdon was an extremely engaging person. He was charming and sociable and was ably assisted in his manifold responsibilities by Lady Willingdon who has been rightly described as an 'outstanding Viceregal lady of the series.' Sir Samuel Hoare, who was Secretary of State for India (1931-35) during the best part of Willingdon's Viceroyalty, has drawn up a vivid picture of his colleague's political predilections and personality in contrast with those of his Indian adversary, Mahatma Gandhi: 'He and Gandhi,' writes Hoare, 'differed so completely from each other that it would have been a miracle if they had understood each other. On the one hand, the accomplished man of the Western world, the most engaging product of Eton, Cambridge and Westminster, in his beautifully cut grey suit and I zingari tie, on the other, the toothless seer with his *khaddar* and spinning wheel.'[1] There was indeed nothing

[1]Templewood Viscount (The Rt. Hon Sir Samuel Hoare), *NINE TROUBLED YEARS*, Collins, 1954, p.67.

in common between the two men. In spite of his flagging physical and mental energies, Willingdon had accepted the burden of keeping India safe for the British empire and was constitutionally incapable of appreciating the depth of resentment which continual opposition to the country's aspirations was apt to provoke among its people. He was in fact the *Beau Ideal* of the bureaucracy which heartily execrated the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 1931. Backed by his home Government, says a writer, Willingdon 'lost no time in reversing the whole position of affairs Gandhi —the late exalted—found himself once more in prison.'[2] Irwin, the 'idealist,' had left the 'realist' a hard row to hoe, but the stout-hearted husbandman was undaunted by the task that lay before him.

The Viceroy and his advisers set before themselves two distinct objectives—namely, first to reduce the Congress—Government agreement to a deadletter and to shift adroitly the blame for the breach on the shoulders of Gandhi and his followers and, secondly, to inveigle the Mahatma into attending the Second Round Table Conference which was due to be opened in London in September 1931. The second goal was as important as the first. It was manifestly impossible that any scheme of constitutional reform could be acceptable to the majority of the Indian people unless it was supported by the Congress. Gandhi's attendance at the Conference would secure for its proposals this indispensable *imprimatur*. Moreover, his presence in London would give the diehard propagandists an inestimable opportunity to proclaim to the world that India's inability to attain an independent status was 'inherent' in her domestic distractions.

Gandhi refused to be outsmarted by the Viceroy and the bureaucrats. A man of great rectitude, he sincerely strove to transform the truce into a permanent settlement between his party and the Government, but the renewal of official repression made any such durable understanding impos-

[2] *The Unsung* by Maud Diver India under British rule had the misfortune of being written about by almost every other cold-weather tourist, whose invariable theme was the country's unfitness to govern itself.

sible. After an exchange of a series of messages, he informed the Viceroy on August 13, about his final decision not to attend the London Conference. Explaining in his weekly journal, *Young India,* how fundamental were the differences between the Congress and the Government on the March settlement, Gandhi wrote on August 20: 'If the Congress was unworthy of confidence, or if its demand was distasteful or unacceptable to the British Government, the settlement should not have been entered into. Further, if the Congress by any action on its part proved itself unworthy of confidence, the settlement should have been repudiated Either could have been an honest course. But to have commenced with distrust, hardly when the ink had dried on the paper on which the settlement was written, was and still is difficult for me to understand.'[3] He accordingly made an emphatic protest against the resumption of the Government's policy of coercion, intimidation and harrassment Nevertheless, neither side was prepared for a final rupture—the Congress out of a desire not to precipitate another country-wide conflict, and the Government because it was loath to ruin the chance of Gandhi's participation in the Conference. At a hastily convened meeting at Simla, the differences between the Government and the Congress were patched up in what was described as a 'second settlement' which enabled Gandhi to sail for England on August 29, 1931.

Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference despite the fact that the proceedings of the first were hardly reassuring. The first Conference, which was opened by the King on November 12, 1930 in London with great solemnity, was attended by 89 delegates, 57 of whom were from British India. The Indian states had 16 members, while the British Government and the opposition in the two Houses of Parliament were represented by the remaining number The absence of the Congress was a grave derogation from the representative character of the deliberations, but the country's case was ably and eloquently

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[3]Tendulkar D G, *MAHATMA,* Vol. III, The Times of India Press, 1952, p. 136.

advocated by men like Sapru and Jayakar. 'The time has long since passed by,' declared Sapru at the plenary session of the Conference on November 17, 1930, 'when India could be told to hold its soul in patience and to march to that far-off ideal through the ages. I very respectfully beg of you to change your outlook on the whole situation.'[4] The Maharaja of Bikaner, *the Dean of the Princely Order*, struck an equally patriotic note by proclaiming that the rulers of the states were willing to make their 'contribution to the greater prosperity and contentment of India.' He suggested that federation would be the most appropriate form of Government for the country. The deliberations were marked by great enthusiasm and winged words flew in profusion in the noble precincts of the Conference hall without much attention being paid to their real import. *In the same speech, the Maharaja had emphatically* declared that the treaties with the states were inviolable and that the relations of the princes with the Crown of England could not be changed or transferred to another authority without their express consent[5]

The spokesman of the Muslim delegates, the Aga Khan, was equally forthright in asserting, 'that no advance is possible or practicable, whether in the provinces or in the Central Government, without adequate safeguards for the Muslims of India' and added that no constitution would be acceptable to them without such comprehensive guarantees.[6] The British point of view was presented with equal force and decisiveness. Long before the Conference was convened, Churchill had declared: 'Sooner or later you will have to crush Gandhi and the Indian Congress and all they stand for.' In December 1930, he said: 'The British nation has no intention whatever of relinquishing control of Indian life and progress . . . . We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel

[4]*INDIAN ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE*—November 12, 1930 to January 19, 1931, Government of India, Calcutta, p. 32

[5]Ibid p 38.

[6]Ibid p 246.

in the crown of the King, which, more than all our Dominions and Dependencies, constitutes the glory and strength of the British Empire'[7] Lord Peel solemnly told the Conference at its plenary session on January 19, 1931 that when they had to deal with India's 'vast communities, so different in their history and social customs and religion,' long patience was necessary before settlement could be reached.

The attitude of the Conservative Party to Indian aspirations was made clear by its leader, Baldwin, who, in his speech in the House of Commons on March 12, 1931, declared that there were many difficulties in the way of drawing up a constitution for India. 'Apart from the pledge,' he said, 'of an honest attempt to confront these difficulties and thus carry on the work of the Conference, the Conservative Party is uncommitted; everyone is uncommitted, for the simple reason that it is impossible for any of us to pronounce a definite opinion until a definite plan is before us.'[8] The Labour Prime Minister was equally non-committal. Apart from his own reluctance to part with so great a prize as India, MacDonald could not possibly commit himself to a course of action that would have brought ruin to his party and his own political future. 'If Mr. MacDonald,' writes Brailsford, 'had then given publicly the pledge which Mr. Gandhi sought, it is probable that both the opposition parties could have repudiated it and brought his Government down.'[9]

There was thus no disposition on the part of any of the major political parties in England to concede the justice of the Indian demand. Nevertheless, some of the leading Indian delegates to the Conference expressed their conviction in a manifesto issued on February 6, 1931, that 'English opinion had undergone a remarkable change in India's favour' and that the safeguards that were demanded on behalf of Britain 'would not affect the substance of the scheme which sought to transfer political power into

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[7]Nehru Jawaharlal, *DISCOVERY OF INDIA*, Signet Press, 1946, p 529.

[8]*THE INDIAN ANNUAL REGISTER*, 1931, Vol. I, p.432.

[9]Brailsford H. N., *REBEL INDIA*. New Republic, 1931, p.148.

Indian hands.'[10] Gandhi and the Congress were less sanguine and yet they decided that the British Government should be given every opportunity to redeem its pledge to India. The Mahatma's willingness to go to England was also partly influenced by his determination to 'strain every nerve to make the provisional peace a permanent one,' although his moderation and sense of fair-play evoked no appreciation from the other side On the contrary, it was asserted on behalf of the British that their restraint and toleration had 'only in the end bred license.'

Gandhi's mission to England was well-defined His object in crossing the high seas was not to wring mere political concessions from the British, but to secure the substance of freedom for his country which, he was convinced, was both qualified and competent to administer its own affairs without alien tutelage. The Congress, the forty-fifth session of which was held at Karachi towards the end of March 1931 under the presidentship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, gave the Mahatma a clear and categorical mandate. Reiterating that the country's goal was *purna swaraj* or complete independence, the Karachi resolution declared that any Congress delegation at any conference with the British Government would work for it 'in particular so as to give the nation control over the defence forces, foreign affairs, finance and fiscal and economic policy, and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England, and the right of either party to end the partnership at will, provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India.'[11]

Though pledged to the attainment of complete independence, the Congress was thus willing to accept a variant of it so long as the transfer of power was real and effective. There was no unfairness in the demand, for India merely

[10] *THE INDIAN ANNUAL REGISTER*, 1931, Vol I, p 25
[11] Ibid p.268.

asked for what the Balfour Report, endorsed by the Imperial Conference in 1926, had conceded to the Dominions under the British Crown. Referring to the position of the 'group of self-governing communities composed of Great Britain and the Dominions,' the Report says that 'they are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' The British Empire, the document claimed, was not founded upon negations but depended essentially 'on positive ideals.' Long before the Balfour Declaration was made, the Leader of the House of Commons and head of the Conservative Party had proclaimed in the House of Commons on March 30, 1920 that Dominion home rule implied the right of self-determination and secession. Drawing attention to this authoritative statement, Professor A. B. Keith wrote on February 12, 1935 when the Government of India Act was being laboriously prepared: 'I have been unable to find a single denial of this view by any Cabinet Minister speaking in Parliament with like authority.'[12]

The Indian demand for constitutional reform, as envisaged in the Karachi resolution, was, therefore, neither far-fetched nor extravagant and yet it was shouted down as being preposterous and Utopian. Grave financial crisis led to the replacement of the Labour Government in England by a coalition of the three parties, with MacDonald continuing as the Prime Minister. In the India Office, the place of Wedgewood Benn was taken by Sir Samuel Hoare. All these important changes took place before the Second Round Table Conference assembled in September 1931. Gandhi's presence at the Conference was deeply resented by many Conservatives and we have it on the authority

[12]Keith Prof A B., *LETTERS ON IMPERIAL RELATIONS, INDIAN REFORM, CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW* 1916-35, Oxford University Press, 1935, p 349.

of Hoare that not all of them were 'reactionaries.'[13] Part of the reason for their hostility was the realisation that he alone held the master-key to the constitution they and their colleagues had set out to write. The King was averse to meeting the Mahatma and exclaimed: 'What! Have this rebel fakir in the Palace after he has been behind all these attacks on my loyal officers?' Again, His Majesty could not stomach the idea of having 'the little man' in the Palace with 'no proper clothes on, and bare knees' The King, as Hoare points out, was, however, finally mollified When the two men met, the King asked Gandhi: 'Why did you boycott my son?' The Mahatma politely replied. 'Not your son, your Majesty, but the official representative of the British Crown.'[14] Another episode has been recorded by Hoare and it will be read with interest He writes· "Just as Gandhi was taking leave, the King said: 'Remember, Mr. Gandhi, I won't have any attacks on my Empire!' I held my breath in fear of an argument between the two. Gandhi's *savoir faire* saved the situation with a grave and deferential reply 'I must not be drawn into a political argument in your Majesty's Palace after receiving your Majesty's hospitality.' "[15]

Attention has been drawn to these episodes at some length in order to show that an all-pervasive prejudice existed among the ruling class in England against the Congress and its great leader. In spite of its decisiveness, the Karachi mandate had given Gandhi a great degree of latitude to negotiate a reasonable agreement on India's constitutional progress He was not opposed to the inclusion of all reasonable safeguards for the British in the proposed constitution. In fact, no discerning or fair-minded Indian envisaged a complete severance of the relations between his country and England. At the first Round Table Conference, Sapru had told his British colleagues: 'Provide as

[13]Templewood Viscount (The Rt Hon Sir Samuel Hoare), *NINE TROUBLED YEARS*, Collins, 1954, p 55

[14]Tendulkar D G., *MAHATMA*, Vol III, The Times of India Press, 1952, p 159

[15]Templewood Viscount (The Rt Hon Sir Samuel Hoare), *NINE TROUBLED YEARS*, Collins, 1954, pp 59-60.

many safeguards as you can so long as those safeguards do not destroy the vital principle, and then go ahead with courage and with faith.' This was also the Mahatma's attitude. Decades later, commenting on Gandhi's fair-mindedness and generosity, Hoare wrote: "I believe that if I had been able to say to him (Gandhi) 'Take Dominion status at once without any safeguards,' we should not only have found him one of our best friends, *but he would immediately have offered us in return all the safeguards in the Government of India Bill and many more besides if any one had wanted them.*" (Italics mine). He added: 'Of course, I could not make any such offer.'[16]

National pride, self-respect, justice and generosity found no place at the Conference table. Apart from stray references to it in the speeches, the vital issue of India's freedom was almost forgotten. The voice of reason was silenced by the clamant demands of the communalists whose sectional claims were sedulously encouraged by British diehards. Sir Edward Benthall's exultant circular, to which reference has already been made in an earlier chapter, furnishes a glaring example of how a mighty combination of reactionary forces was organised to defeat Gandhi's mission in England. The communal question became all-important and it seemed as though the only purpose of calling the Conference in distant London was to set a plethora of disparate elements from India on the

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[16]Lord Templewood's memoirs *Nine Troubled Years* make fascinating reading In the chapters on India, he reveals himself as a man of great discernment and sympathy towards this country. But, as Secretary of State, he spoke and acted as an entirely different person. We will hear more about him in the course of this chapter It is, however, pertinent to recall what H. G. Wells wrote about him: "This Sir Samuel (Hoare) is one of those rulers of whom we in Britain, thanks for those occult forces in high places, are unable to rid ourselves For some obscure reason he must always sit in at the councils that are responsible for our lives and freedom!...
Manifestly, this man has never had an idea in his head except reaction; he is as helpful in the business of reconstructing the world as a stampeding pony One supreme horror gnaws him, the end of Society, with a large S, assailed by liberty, equality, fraternity, socialism, democracy and, something almost too horrible for language, the 'Bolshi'." (*Guide to the New World,* 1941, pages 109 and 111.)

impossible task of unravelling the tangled skein of communalism. Brushing aside all machinations and undaunted by the impossible nature of his task, Gandhi undertook to achieve a *modus vivendi* on the problem of the minorities' representation in the new legislatures. He invited the Aga Khan to name his price on behalf of the Muslims and promised to pay it provided the Aga Khan in his turn undertook to support the Congress' demand for independence. The Muslim leader refused, taking shelter behind the plea that recognition of communal claims was a pre-condition to everything else.[17] It was indeed impossible for him to come to terms with Gandhi without incurring the grave displeasure of the British, to whom he was indebted for much of his eminence and affluence. Leaders of communal and commercial interests found it far more advantageous to reach an agreement amongst themselves, each group giving liberally to the other what did not belong to it in the confident hope that the entire transaction would be readily endorsed by the British Government. The nature of the compact, which the spokesmen of the Muslims, the Depressed Classes, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the Europeans entered into proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the object of the Conference was not to settle the constitutional question but to shelve it.

Such manoeuvres were countenanced and encouraged at a time when the Statute of Westminster, conferring on the Dominions a status equal to that of England herself, was being actively discussed in the British Parliament and which received royal assent ten days after the Indian Round Table Conference concluded its barren deliberations on December 1, 1931. 'I am quite certain,' declared Mahatma Gandhi, 'that you did not convene this Round Table Conference and bring us all six thousand miles away from our homes and occupations to settle the communal question' Commenting on the so-called settlement reached by the minorities' interests, he said: 'I have no

[17]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU. A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 180

hesitation in saying to His Majesty's Government, to those friends who seek to represent or who think they represent the minorities mentioned against their names, and indeed to the whole world, that this scheme is not one designed to achieve responsible Government, but is undoubtedly a scheme designed to share power with the bureaucracy.' The Congress would not on any account countenance such a document and would 'wander, no matter how many years, in the wilderness rather than lend itself to a proposal under which the hardy tree of freedom and responsible Government can never grow'. He did not, he said, desire to deprive Sir Hubert Carr, the signatory to the pact on behalf of the European community, and his associates of the satisfaction resulting from the achievement, but in his opinion, what they 'have done is to sit by the carcase, and they have performed the laudable feat of dissecting that carcase.'[18]

Gandhi had, however, no reason to regard his mission in England as a failure. The justice or the strength of India's case could not be undermined merely by the manoeuvres of interested persons. Indeed, the British Government suffered most from the fiasco of the Conference. Thenceforward, it became clear that India's deliverance from foreign rule could not be expected from discussions and deliberations at committees and conferences, but by the development of the inner strength of her people. Independence would have to be *won*, and not *received* for, obviously Britain had two different standards when dealing with the political aspirations of the so-called 'white Dominions' and the 'non-white' dependencies. When Gandhi turned his back on England in December 1931, the hope of settling the Indian problem on the basis of mutual trust and good-will was extinguished, to the incalculable loss of both countries.

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[18]R.T.C. (2nd Session), September 7, 1931 to December 1, 1931, *PROCEEDINGS OF THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE COMMITTEE AND THE MINORITIES COMMITTEE*, p 543.

Gandhi's presence in England for several months, however, served a useful purpose. Millions of English people, most of whom had no sympathy with their rulers on the Indian question, saw in this sparsely-clothed and emaciated man the messiah of his countrymen. He was more—a true leader and benefactor of the entire afflicted mankind. 'He has been able,' declared Professor Ernest Barker, 'to commend himself, and the cause of his country, as something far beyond the stature of a political agitator or a matter of mere political agitation. He has caught the attention and focussed the interest of the Western people at large'. Bernard Shaw sized up Gandhi in his own inimitable fashion. He exclaimed: 'Impression of Gandhi! You might as well ask one to give his impression of the Himalayas.' The rise of Gandhi in world esteem indirectly helped the Indian problem to achieve global significance.

When Gandhi arrived in Bombay on December 28, 1931 he saw the country in turmoil. In the North-West Frontier Province, Khan Adbul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, were the especial targets of official anger. Their crime consisted in organising their freedom-loving people into a well-knit band of patriots prepared to make all sacrifices on behalf of their motherland The establishment of a training camp for the Red Shirt volunteers and the exhortation of the Khan brothers to their followers to be prepared for further suffering and sacrifice in the event of the London deliberations on the national demand proving illusory, were miscontrued by the bureaucracy as a calculated attempt to defy the Government The Khan brothers refused to attend the 'Darbar' summoned by the provincial Government on the valid ground that they were not free to make any commitments on behalf of their party before consulting the Congress executive. Their refusal was probably the last straw and the authorities struck at the Red Shirts when Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was preparing to proceed to Bombay to meet Gandhi for consultations. Besides promulgating a number of authoritarian measures, Ghaffar Khan and his colleagues were arrested on

December 24, 1931, four days before Gandhi's return to India.

The situation in Uttar Pradesh was equally grave. Early in October 1931, a peasants' conference had been held at Allahabad when resolutions were passed calling the attention of the Government to the inadequacy of the rent remissions granted in the district. The farmers' grievances were long-standing and the Congress was naturally anxious to secure their redress. At the time, its leaders were not disposed to launch a no-tax campaign as such a course of action was likely to jeopardise the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Mahatma's mission in London. Their circumspection was however, ill-requited and in December an ordinance was promulgated by the Viceroy interdicting the starting of a campaign for more liberal rent remissions In his telegram to the Viceroy on December 29, Gandhi maintained that the Congress had not authorised any 'no rent' movement and that when the time for collections arrived it had merely asked the peasants to suspend payment till the negotiations then in progress ended. 'Any Government,' he told Willingdon, 'jealous of the welfare of the masses in its charge would welcome voluntary co-operation of a body like the Congress, which admittedly exercises great influence over the masses and whose one ambition is to serve them faithfully.' But such considerations did not count with a Government that resorted to the easier methods of arrest and imprisonment. On December 26, Nehru was arrested while he was on his way to Bombay.[19] In Bengal, the terrorist activities of individuals were sought to be countered by measures that were calculated to 'unman a whole race'. Declaring that while the Congress was firmly opposed to violence of any kind, Gandhi said that his party could not in any way 'associate itself with Government terrorism as is betrayed by the Bengal Ordinance and acts done thereunder'.

[19]Sitaramayya Dr. Pattabhi, *THE HISTORY OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS,* Vol. I, The Working Committee of the Congress, p.513

In his speech at the Round Table Conference, Gandhi had told his listeners that he did not know 'in what direction our paths lie'. To resolve his doubts about the future, he, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs, got into touch with the Government of India immediately after his return to the country and prayed for a meeting with the Viceroy. He pointed out that even the issue of constitutional reform 'dwindled into insignificance' when the country and its people were confronted by rampant frightfulness In his telegram of January 1, 1932, he said: 'I hope no self-respecting Indian will run the risk of killing national spirit for a doubtful contingency of securing a constitution, to work which no nation with a stamina may be left' The Congress Working Committee, which met to hear Gandhi's report of his visit to England and to take counsel with him on the future course of action, adopted a comprehensive resolution drawing attention to the various acts of the authorities that conflicted with the spirit of the Delhi Pact It also notified the Government that, if no satisfactory redress was forthcoming, the country would be asked to resume civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes.

Willingdon welcomed the Congress 'challenge' as a heaven-sent opportunity for uprooting, if he could, the party from India's national life. He was confident of the whole-hearted support of his official superior, Hoare, who, if anything, was even more forthright in his condemnation of the Indian patriots When the Viceroy launched his mighty crusade against the Congress, beginning with the arrest of Gandhi and Sardar Patel on January 4, 1932 and followed by the rounding up of all the prominent personalities in the party, the Secretary of State assured the House of Commons that there was to be no 'drawn battle this time' He was indeed grateful to Providence that he had in Willingdon an 'experienced' Viceroy, who, besides being 'one of the most charming men of his generation', was a determined defender of the Empire. With remarkable fidelity to his official comrade of old, he wrote in his memoirs years later: 'Willingdon had felt that he could not

ignore Gandhi's threat at a time when disorder was spreading dangerously in two key provinces. He therefore ordered his arrest under a Bombay Ordinance of 1827.' But Willingdon did much more at the same time. He promulgated four new ordinances, which gave the Government of India powers "even more far-reaching than those of 1930 which Lord Irwin's biographer had termed 'this catalogue of absolutism' ". No body of men and no organisation directly or indirectly associated with the Congress was allowed to function in freedom. Police officers and magistrates were given unbridled powers to do whatever they chose. Even the aged mother of Nehru was not exempt from violence.[20] Nehru says in his Autobiography: 'Civil liberty ceased to exist, and both person and property could be seized by the authorities. It was a declaration of a kind of state of siege for the whole of India, the extent and intensity of application being left to the discretion of the local authorities.'[21]

The onslaught on the Congress was thorough, ruthless and all-comprehending, strongly suggesting, as Professor Brecher observes, 'premeditated action.' He adds: 'The ordinances were obviously prepared in advance.'[22] Even Hoare was constrained to admit that 'the Ordinances that we have approved are very drastic and severe. They cover almost every activity of Indian life.' And yet he glibly writes in his memoirs: 'If we wished to suppress Indian nationalism, we could, I feel sure, have succeeded.'[23] One wonders what other measures of official recklessness Lord Templewood had in mind when he wrote these words. The Government of India under Willingdon had acquired almost all the characteristics of an administration against which the great Chinese sage Confucius warned thousands of

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[20]The death of Motilal Nehru had taken place before these happenings He died at Lucknow on February 6, 1931

[21]*JAWAHARLAL NEHRU. AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY,* Bodley Head, 1936, p.322.

[22]Brecher Michael. *NEHRU A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY,* Oxford University Press, 1959, p 183.

[23]Templewood Viscount (The Rt Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare), *NINE TROUBLED YEARS,* Collins, 1954, p.81.

years ago. During the first four months of the struggle, 80,000 men and women were arrested and yet the movement, though bereft of leadership, was maintained at its original vigour. The British Government was unmoved by the spectacle of such mass suffering. Irwin declared in public that, if he had still been in India, he could have done nothing else[24] There were no more honourable or upright nationalists than men like Gandhi, Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Patel and Bose and yet the reward for the co-operation of their organisation in the constitutional discussions was insult and injury.[25] The record of the three Round Table Conferences was indeed one of utter futility.

The Communal Award of August 4, 1932 was the inevitable fruit of the sterile deliberations in London. The Award, given by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, purported to be a scheme for the composition of the new Indian legislature. It was a revealing document and confirmed the widely-held belief that the Indian separatists and dissidents could always look forward to earning a much richer reward by making common cause

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[24]Coupland Sir Reginald, *THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, p.128

[25]The root of the trouble lay in Britain's determination not to concede India's right to freedom The following pages will make this even more evident as we discuss the reforms documents that were drawn up during Willingdon's regime The forthright speech of Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of Australia, at the Sydney Rotary Club, provoked in England a lively debate on colonialism in September 1959 Even the sedate London *Times*, whose editorials have often eloquently upheld the imperial theme, endorsed Latham's charge that Britain lost her overseas colonies in Asia and Africa on account of the racial arrogance and aloofness of her agents in the subject countries Racial pride alone does not, however, reveal in full the serious weakness of Britain's colonial policy in the past In a country like India, which held a pivotal position in the Empire, domestic problems were exacerbated to an extent that made their solution on a rational basis almost impossible Above all, there was a manifest disinclination on the part of the foreign rulers to fulfil their own solemnly given pledges The defects and deficiencies of the traditional policy of colonialism are now being more widely appreciated and since empires have still to pass into the limbo of forgotten history, it is never too late to learn a salutary lesson from past mistakes

with the alien government than by joining the forces of nationalism. The Prime Minister generously gave the minorities all that they had demanded in their pact at the Round Table Conference. The Award accepted the principle of separate electorates for the Muslim, the Sikh, the Indian Christian, the Anglo-Indian and the European communities, besides confirming the traditional policy of 'weightage' for the minorities. For the first time, the Depressed Classes or Harijans were given separate representation on the astounding ground that they formed a distinct entity from the main body of Hindus. The British Government could, of course, argue that the innovation was desired by no less a person than Dr. Ambedkar, a signatory to the 'minorities pact' in London.

The Award was one more mill-stone round India's neck. It divided the Indian electoral system into twelve mutually exclusive compartments namely, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, the European community in the country, the Depressed Classes, the Indian Christians, Commerce and Industry, Landlords and the monied classes, Labour, University graduates and women.[26] Inevitably, the decision became a prolific source of disputes and bickerings. 'Apart from the conflict,' say Sir Maurice Gwyer and Appadorai, 'in respect of the Depressed Classes, the Communal Award exacerbated communal feelings rather than calmed them.'[27] Indeed, the Award was applauded precisely for its disruptive contents. The Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, composed of eminent British political leaders, acclaimed it as embodying an arrangement that appeared 'to us to be well thought out and balanced' and heartily endorsed the Government's determination not to entertain any suggestions for its alteration or modification unless the change was supported by the parties concerned. While it regarded MacDonald's

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[26]Gangulee N, *THE MAKING OF FEDERAL INDIA*, James Nisbet, 1936, p 27.

[27]*SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, 1921-47, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A Appadorai, Oxford University Press, 1957, Introduction, p xlii.

handiwork as 'an essential and inevitable condition of any new constitutional scheme,' another authority defended the misguided liberality to the minorities as a 'concession to human weakness'![28]

Such facile explanations in defence of a patently pernicious scheme could deceive none. Minto's grant of separate representation to Muslims was made at a time when Indian nationalism was less articulate and not at all assertive. On the strength of specious arguments, the process of disruption was taken a stage further under the Montford Reforms, thereby inspiring a genuine fear among discerning nationalists that every new constitutional enquiry would be utilised as a convenient occasion for further weakening the political unity of the country. The repeated failure of Gandhi, the Congress and other forward-looking elements to compose the differences between the Hindus and Muslims on the issue of the latter's representation in the Central and Provincial legislatures furnished a grave warning against the disastrous consequences of giving a wider scope to the vicious system of sectional representation. It is true that the treatment meted out to the Harijans by their co-religionists was, and still is, wicked and indefensible, but the remedy certainly did not lie in amputating a vital limb of the great community. It is, of course, impossible to say what the consequences to India's unity would have been if the provisions of the Award pertaining to the Harijans had not been challenged, but they would certainly not have been harmless. Muslim separatism led to Pakistan and the stimulation of similar tendencies among the Harijans by destroying the basis of interdependence between them and the rest of the Hindu community would most assuredly have undermined the cohesive strength of the components of divided India. It would, moreover, have encouraged other castes and sub-castes, in which the Hindu society abounds, to make their own claims for preferential treatment with the result that the Indian popula-

[28] *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 811.

tion would have been reduced into a congeries of mutually exclusive and self-regarding minorities, each being concerned about its own interests and none about those of the country as a whole.[29]

Gandhi decided to stem this dangerous drift towards the dismemberment of the Hindu society and the Indian political structure. When in England, he had given clear indications of his determination to resist such a catastrophe with his life "The claim," he had said at the Round Table Conference, "advanced on behalf of the 'untouchables' is to me the unkindest cut of all. It means a perpetual bar sinister." He had already taken Hoare into his confidence about his decision to oppose any unfair provisions in the name of the minorities. On August 18, 1932, he intimated to the British Prime Minister from the Yeravda Central Prison that he would fast unto death from September 20, if the proposals concerning the Harijans in the Communal Award were not withdrawn. MacDonald, of course, declined to make any modification, adding that 'only agreement of the communities themselves can substitute other electoral arrangements for those that Government have devised in a sincere endeavour to weigh the conflicting claims on their just merits'.

Gandhi was thus forced to undergo the fiery ordeal from the day announced by him. The accusation that the fast was an uninhibited coercion is wholly irrelevant. There could not be a more inexcusable coercion than that of imposing upon the Indian people an electoral arrangement

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[29]Minorities became a favourite theme of the defenders of British rule in India. Sir Sydney Low saw no enormity in making the following observations· 'And another minority is that of the 72 million of the protected States, who claim that no changes should be made in the Indian constitutional system which would place them in a worse position than they are at present. Here is a trust which the Crown has accepted by treaty, grant, and convention, and it cannot abandon or delegate it against the wishes and interests of those concerned.' (*The Indian States and Ruling Princes*, page 10) In other words, it was the devout prayer of the States' people that they should be eternally misgoverned and oppressed by their irresponsible rulers! In such propagandistic writing truth is the first casualty

that would have made the system of representation, bad as it already was, much worse. On September 20, Rabindranath Tagore told the inmates of Visva Bharati: 'A shadow is darkening to-day over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun. Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum, and though it may be our misfortune to lose him in the battlefield, the fight will be passed to everyone of us to be carried on to the final end.' Prominent leaders from all over the country, including the venerable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jayakar, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, G. D Birla and Hriday Nath Kunzru, assembled and deliberated in Bombay and Poona with the two-fold object of saving the Mahatma's life and of securing the abrogation of the objectionable provisions in the Communal Award. The Scheduled Castes were also strongly represented. Besides Dr. Ambedkar, there were M C. Rajah, Rajbhoj and several other prominent Harijan leaders, all of whom like their other co-religionists were anxious to shorten the agony of the fasting Mahatma.

An agreement on Harijan representation from the general constituencies in substitution of the arrangement envisaged in the Government's Award, was reached and ratified on September 25, which enabled Gandhi to end his fast from the following morning. The revised scheme, which has become famous in the Indian history as the Poona Pact, reserved for Harijans a number of seats in the legislatures much larger than those provided in the MacDonald decision. In the first instance, Harijan voters were required to elect a panel of candidates, from among whom the members of the legislature would be chosen by the general body of voters comprising both Hindus and Harijans The new electoral arrangement was certainly not an ideal one since it made deep inroads into the representation of caste Hindus, especially in Bengal But no price was too great for the Hindus to pay in order to preserve the integrity of their society and to make amends to the much-wronged section of their community.

Dr. Ambedkar bore deep resentment against the caste Hindus as much for the personal wrongs suffered by him as

for the grave injury that was being done to his people. The iron had entered his soul and nothing that Gandhi or the Congress did by way of reparations could satisfy him. But, during the September crisis, he shared the anxiety of his countrymen for Gandhi's survival. Asked whether he was interested in Gandhi's life, he replied: 'Yes, Mahatmaji, I am. And if you devoted yourself entirely to the welfare of the Depressed Classes, you would then become our hero.'[30] The deliverance of the Harijans from their social and economic disabilities became one of the cherished missions of Gandhi's life. Apart from the essential justice of the cause, the sucessful prevention of this community from political secession imposed on the caste Hindus the obligation of securing its integration in all walks of life. To gain this end, the Mahatma ceaselessly strove to rouse the conscience of the caste Hindus against the iniquity of pushing the brothers and sisters of their own faith outside the pale of their society and of denying them even the normal amenities of life in the sacred name of religion.

On May 1, 1933, he conveyed to the Government of India his decision to go on a fast for twenty-one days from the 8th day of that month 'for reasons wholly unconnected with the Government and solely connected with the Harijan movement'. Gandhi, who was released from prison on the day he commenced the fast, emerged unscathed from the terrible trial, much to the relief and amazement of his countrymen. His country-wide tour on behalf of the Harijans and his single-minded devotion to their cause perturbed some of his followers, including Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai Patel, who feared that the bigger issue of national freedom was likely to suffer by his concentration on social reform. The orthodox section was alarmed at the success of the formidable crusader and a bomb was

[30]Tendulkar D. G, *MAHATMA*, Vol III, 1952, The Times of India Press, p.209.

thrown at him in Poona on June 25, 1934.[31] The outrage, however, greatly strengthened the movement.

On the political front, the tempo of resistance to the Government could not be maintained for an indefinite period, but the determination of nationalist India not to compromise with the authorities on the basic issue of independence remained steadfast. At its 47th session held in Calcutta towards the end of March 1933, the Congress reiterated its resolve to strive for *purna swaraj* and declared that 'civil disobedience was a perfectly legitimate means for the protection of the rights of the people, for the vindication of national self-respect and for the attainment of the national goal'. In May of that year, the acting President of the Congress, M S. Aney, suspended the movement for six weeks as a preliminary to its eventual withdrawal in order to give respite to the country to acquire sufficient strength for renewing the struggle.

India ceased to take much interest in the London discussions after the abortive outcome of the Second Round Table Conference. The third and last of the series assembled on November 17, 1932, with only forty-six delegates, and broke up on December 24 without transacting any worthwhile business. Both the Indian National Congress and the British Labour Party had declined to join the Conference. Sapru, that determined constitutional fighter,

[31]So deep was Gandhi's belief in the iniquity of 'untouchability' that he attributed the Bihar earthquake to the existence of this social injustice. His attempt to connect the convulsions of nature with human folly was roundly criticised by Tagore. There were two severe earthquakes in India during Willingdon's regime The Bihar calamity occurred on January 15, 1934 involving considerable loss of life and property The relief organised by the Congress under the leadership of Rajendra Prasad was most effective and won wide appreciation The Government also spared no efforts or resources in giving aid to the afflicted persons The Quetta disaster of May 31, 1935 was even more severe. Though Baluchistan does not have the problem of untouchability, Gandhi insisted that 'a man of prayer regards what are known as physical calamities as divine chastisement' He and Rajendra Prasad were not allowed to undertake relief operations in Quetta on the ground that private agencies could do little there.

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pleaded in vain for a few concessions in the matter of transferring control over the Defence portfolio. The princes, whose reactionary attitude throughout the long years of constitutional deliberations had been cleverly camouflaged, were now explicit in declaring their antagonism to any change that affected their autocracy. 'The Conference,' says Coupland, 'could not rid itself of an uneasy impression that the federalist enthusiasm of 1930 had lost its fire.'[32]

The British Government, true to its assertion that it alone was the arbiter of India's destiny, formulated comprehensive constitutional proposals for this country and published them as a White Paper on March 15, 1933. In the following month, a joint committee of both Houses of British Parliament was formed under the chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow, who was to succeed Willingdon as India's Viceroy, 'to consider the future government of India' with special reference to the White Paper proposals. It was a redundant body since the Conservative Party, which now enjoyed a plenitude of political power, had already made up its mind on what should and should not be conceded to India. From the British point of view, the Joint Committee, however, served the useful purpose of tying up the loose ends that had been unwittingly left in the White Paper scheme, such, for instance, as those relating to the safety of the European community's commercial interests in India under the future dispensation. Twenty-seven persons from British and Princely India were associated with the joint committee as assessors with no constitutional status of their own. The Committee sat almost continuously from April 1933 until November 1934, holding 159 meetings and examining 120 witnesses. The gigantic labours of a succession of British statesmen eventually blossomed into the India Bill which reached the Statute Book on July 24, 1935. Hoare, who had left the India Office by the time of the third reading of the Bill to become his country's Foreign Secretary, modestly claimed that he had 'seen the 473

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[32]Coupland Sir Reginald, *THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1944, p.130.

clauses and 16 Schedules through all the critical stages' and that he had made the 'greatest part of the 1951 speeches that with their fifteen and a half million words, had filled four thousand pages of Hansard.'[33] In a speech in the House of Commons on June 4, 1935, Hoare revealed to an astonished world how much sweat, breath and toil had been expended on the preparation of the unique document known as the Government of India Act, 1935: 'The journey began seven and a half years ago, when Parliament first started the Statutory Commission upon its course. Since that time there has been no halt or remission in our labours. Twenty-five thousand pages of reports, 4,000 pages of the *Official Report*, 600 speeches of my hon. Friend the Under Secretary of State and myself, 15,500,000 words publicly spoken, written and reported, a volume of words in fact twenty times as great as the whole of the Authorised Version of the Bible, bear witness to the toil and trouble that are behind to-day's debate.'[34] Warren Hastings went to pieces from the anguish of his long trial. Who can doubt that India too would have been similarly shattered if by some miraculous process she had been transformed into a human being and condemned to submit to such protracted inquisition?

The Joint Committee, whose Report ran closely on the lines of the White Paper frame-work, indicated its mind by declaring that 'responsible government is not an automatic device which can be manufactured to specification. It is not even a machine which will run on motive-power of its own' The scheme envisaged by the two documents and the Act of 1935 may be briefly narrated. The provinces were given a large measure of internal autonomy by releasing them from the 'superintendence, direction and control' of the Central Government and the Secretary of State, except in certain specific matters. British India was divided into eleven provinces, namely, Madras, Bombay, Bengal,

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[33]Templewood Viscount (The Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare), *NINE TROUBLED YEARS*, Collins, 1954, p.100.
[34]*SPEECHES BY THE RT. HON SIR SAMUEL HOARE*, Secretary of State for India, 1931-35, p.137.

the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Assam, the North-West Frontier Province, Orissa and Sind, the last two being new creations. The Chief Commissionerships of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg and the Andaman Islands, besides the agency of British Baluchistan, completed the map of British India. Burma was separated from the country on April 1, 1937 and it now enjoys the status of an independent nation.

Six provinces, namely, Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam were given bicameral legislatures, those in the rest being unicameral. The Lothian Committee's recommendation against adult franchise led to a cautious increase in the number of eligible voters who now totalled some thirty million. Though Lionel Curtis' dual system of government was abolished, the effective power of the Governor as the head of the Government was not weakened. Apart from the fact that all executive acts were run in his name, he was vested with an armoury of special powers, in the exercise of which he was answerable, not to his ministers or to the people of the province, but to the Governor-General and through him to the Secretary of State and the British Parliament. As before, he remained an autocrat and an alien element in the Indian body politic. He was required to fulfil his 'special responsibilities' by exercising his individual judgment, that is, by functioning independently of his council of ministers. The 'special responsibilities' were: (a) preservation of the peace and tranquillity of the province, (b) protection of the minorities, (c) safeguarding the rights and interests of civil servants, (d) protection of the vested interests of the British commercial community in India, (e) good government of the backward areas not placed under the normal administration, (f) protection of the rights, privileges and immunities of the princes and (g) execution of the Governor-General's orders concerning Federal matters. Further, the Ministers were not entitled to tender advice to the Governor, who was to act in his discretion in such matters as the summoning of the legislature, the appointment of Ministers and the giving or the withholding of

assent to bills or their reservation. The elaborate *Instructions* to the Governor were incorporated into the Act as its integral part. It was perfectly open to him to render the working of even the gravely attenuated form of popular government in his province nugatory if he considered such a course of action necessary.

The provisions concerning the Central Government contained certain unique features. India was to have a federal constitution, the federating units being the five hundred odd autocratically governed principalities on the one hand and the eleven provinces on the other. The federal legislature was to be bicameral, the two Chambers possessing identical powers, except that money bills and votes of supply were to be initiated in the Lower House. The principle of divided responsibility was resurrected for the working of the federal executive. Defence, external affairs and ecclesiastical administration were to be the exclusive charge of the Governor-General who was to control these subjects in 'responsibility to His Majesty's Government and Parliament.' Besides, he was to exercise his unfettered discretion in the fulfilment of his 'special responsibilities' which were similar to those conferred on the provincial Governors, but in his case embracing the entire country. He was, moreover, to perform a dual role in his relations with the states — that of Governor-General when dealing with them on the federal plane and that of Viceroy when exercising the paramountcy rights in matters not acceded to the federation.

This, in its barest outline, was the last constitution granted to India by the British Government, a vital segment of which, namely, the federal structure, was never brought into operation. The Act was acclaimed in superlative terms by its defenders, Amery, for instance, calling it 'a remarkable feat of constructive statesmanship.' The Constitution was intended to be worked by Indians and it was their opinion that really mattered. The opposition of the Congress to the various constitutional proposals was well-known. It maintained that no scheme would be acceptable to India unless it was framed by a constituent

assembly enjoying the confidence of the masses of the people. Indeed, no party worth the name supported the British handiwork. The Council of the National Liberal Federation expressed its conviction that 'any constitution based on the lines of the Joint Parliamentary Committee's report will be wholly unacceptable to all shades of Indian political opinion and will, far from allaying, very much intensify the present deep political discontent in the country. This Federation, therefore, does not want any legislation based upon the Joint Committee's Report.'[35]

In April 1934, Jinnah characterised the White Paper as a 'treacherous scheme', while, in its resolution of April 11-12, 1936, the Muslim League condemned the Act of 1935 as being 'fundamentally bad' and 'most reactionary, retrograde, injurious and fatal to the vital interests of British India *vis-a-vis* the Indian states'. The League's resolution further maintained that the Act was 'calculated to thwart and delay indefinitely the realisation of India's most cherished goal of complete responsible Government' and so it was 'totally unacceptable.'[36] There was thus a virtual unanimity of opinion in India, not only on the inadequacy of the new Constitution, but also on the need for the transfer of effective power to Indian hands forthwith. This view was reinforced by discerning constitutional authorities like Professor Keith who had declared as far back as May 1933: 'In view of the present conditions of feeling both in India and in this country it may well be that the only course open is to surrender British control of India.'[37] That, however, was a counsel of perfection which the British statesmen could not accept, being confident that their political prescience would ensure the permanence of their Empire in defiance of time and change.

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[35]*INDIA IN 1933-34*, Government of India, p.41.

[36]*SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, 1921-47, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, Oxford University Press, 1957, Vol I. p.385

[37]Keith Prof. A.B , *LETTERS ON IMPERIAL RELATIONS, INDIAN REFORM, CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW* 1916-35, Oxford University Press, 1935, p.219.

Some of the reasons for the widespread opposition to the Act of 1935 may be discussed here. First, the type of federation envisaged was unique and constituted a complete negation of all democratic principles The number of units comprising the states was bewilderingly large, besides their being dishearteningly disparate and backward Save a few advanced principalities, they were all sinks of reaction whose continued existence could only be justified by considerations of imperial necessity. Even an enlightened ruler like the Maharaja of Bikaner contended that the States' People's Conference, a representative organisation of the inhabitants of the so-called princely India, was in principle unconstitutional and illegal![38] The accession of the states to the federation was left to the unfettered choice of the rulers, knowing that they were notorious for their capricious behaviour. Indeed, the federation was not to come into existence at all unless the rulers of states representing not less than half their aggregate population and entitled to at least one half the seats assigned to them in the federal upper chamber, had executed the Instruments of Accession. The states' accession, if it materialised, was to be limited only to those subjects expressly ceded by their rulers to the federal Government. Besides, their representatives were to be the nominees of the rulers—a procedure that conflicted fundamentally with the democratic principle of representation through the popular vote. The proposed association of the princes' nominees with the elected representatives from the provinces at the Centre fully deserved Lord Meston's criticism that the statute attempted to mix oil and water. The system of the states' partial accession to the Federation insured the continued stay of the British Government in India in the name of fulfilling its paramountcy obligations to the princes. No attempt was made to end the anomaly of the irresponsible states sharing power with the representatives of British India on the ground that the princes could not be coerced into shed-

[38]Keith Prof. A B., *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA, 1600-1935*, Methuen, 1936, p.451.

ding their mediaevialism. The Joint Committee spoke of the principalities as 'soverign states'—a description that can only be characterised as mischievous especially in view of the Butler Committee's categorical statement that their precise status was unknown to constitutional history. A federation composed of such extremely dissimilar units as the states and the provinces would have provoked deadlocks without a solution or led to a complete surrender of the initiative to the Governor-General in the administration of its affairs. In retrospect, we may feel thankful that the federal part of the constitution never came into existence, thus making it easier for free India to hasten the merger of the states.

Secondly, any effective transfer of power to Indians was rendered impracticable by placing Defence exclusively under the control of the Governor-General. The Simon Commission had declared that the protection of India's frontiers should not for some considerable time to come be regarded as a function of an Indian Government answerable to an Indian legislature, but should be the undivided responsibility of the Imperial Government. The Joint Committee arrived at the same conclusion, though by a different process of reasoning. It rejected out of hand the modest suggestions contained in the Joint Memorandum prepared by the British India delegation which had asked that the Governor-General's Counsellor in charge of Defence should always be a non-official Indian, preferably an elected member of the legislature. The Memorandum further urged that all questions relating to army policy and the annual army budget should be considered by the entire Ministry, including Ministers and Counsellors. As a safeguard against deadlocks, the delegation recommended that in the event of differences of opinion the decision of the Governor-General must prevail. Even these innocuous proposals that conceded nothing substantial to India found no favour with the British Government. The Joint Committee was equally adamant on the question of nationalising India's armed forces. 'Indianization,' it said, 'is a problem

which admits of no facile solution, and least of all one based upon the automatic application of a time-table.' It turned down the Indian delegation's suggestion for completing the process of nationalisation within a period of 20-25 years as impracticable. 'It is, in our judgment,' it observed, 'impossible to include in the Constitution Act or in any other statute a provision for the complete Indianization of the Army within a specified period of time.'[39] Not all the free countries in the world and not all the Dominions in the British Commonwealth were militarily so powerful as to be able to resist foreign aggressions by their own unaided might and yet nobody suggested that they were unfit to govern themselves. India's constitution-makers, however, believed that her case was different because they had persuaded themselves that there was a certain finality in the *status quo* in so far as the affairs of their own empire were concerned

Thirdly, all the vital links that bound India to Britain as a dependency were retained The office of the Secretary of State remained to enable India to receive the benefit of this dignitary's guidance. 'The umbilical cord,' says a writer, 'between the constitutional parent and child was not yet severed,'[40] although the 'parent' happened to be a few thousand years younger and some twenty times smaller than the 'child.' The constitution-makers were, of course, prudent enough to provide ample safeguards for the services and the foreign vested interests in the country. To the armoury of the 'special responsibilities,' with which the Governor-General was endowed by the White Paper, the Joint Committee suggested the following addition: 'The prevention of measures, legislative or administrative, which would subject British goods, imported into India from the United Kingdom, to discriminatory or penal treatment.' Considerable importance was attached to the

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39*JOINT COMMITTEE ON INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM*, 1933-34, para 181.

40*THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 812.

preservation and perpetuation of European interests in India because they, more than anything else, furnished the real motive for seeking to place the Indo-British connection on a permanent basis. On October 13, 1933 Hoare stated with praiseworthy candour: 'Providence could not have supplied a more natural economic relationship than that which has arisen between Great Britain and India in the course of history.'[41] British shipping received the special attention of the Joint Committee which recommended: 'It should be enacted that ships registered in the United Kingdom are not to be subjected by law in British India to any discrimination whatsoever, as regards the ship, officers or crew, or her passengers or cargo, to which ships registered in British India would not be subjected in the United Kingdom.' Here the principle of reciprocity was, of course, meaningless.

It could be easily proved, as was done at the time, that such safeguards were either sterile or mischievous. Keith, for instance, wrote that it required 'only the slightest examination' to show that the protection of the kind sought to be written into the constitution was worthless 'against a legislature which desires to discriminate against the United Kingdom community'. If, however, the safeguards were to be so effective as to place them beyond the reach of the national legislature, it would then mean that no real power had been transferred to the Indians. 'In practice,' Keith wrote on another occasion, 'I have no doubt the safeguards will be worthless while their existence will destroy the possibility of winning by conciliation due regard for our economic and financial interests.'[42] In free India, British interests have lost nothing, thereby proving that the plighted word of the nationalists given in the pre-independence days was as effective as a statutory guarantee. To-day, the Indo-British collaboration is most fruitful

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[41] *SPEECHES BY THE RT. HON. SIR SAMUEL HOARE*, Secretary of State for India, 1931-35, p.77.

[42] Keith Prof. A B., *LETTERS ON IMPERIAL RELATIONS, INDIAN REFORM, CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW*, 1916-35, Oxford University Press, 1935, pp 208, 209.

and mutually beneficial. Such a happy concord between the two countries would have been impossible except on the basis of equality of status.

Thus in all vital respects the Act of 1935 fell far short of India's expectations. Hoare was honest and frank when he said that it would be impossible for the 'extremists to get control of the federal centre'. Similarly, he exposed the irrelevancy of comparing India's status under the new dispensation with that of Ireland. No apology is needed for quoting him at some length as the passage clinches the issue: 'Compare the Indian position with Irish position In India the Governor-General, the Provincial Governors and other high officials are still to be appointed by the Crown. The security Services, the executive officers of the Federal and Provincial Governments, are still to be recruited and protected by Parliament The Army, the ultimate power in India, is to remain under the undivided control of Parliament These are no paper safeguards.'[43]

It was, therefore, not the incompetence of the Indian people, but the determination on the part of the British Government not to part with power that accounted for the reactionary character of the Act of 1935. The communal differences were no bar to constitutional progress, as the Congress and all the leading parties in the country had reconciled themselves to the MacDonald award, having produced no scheme of their own in substitution for it. Indeed, Britain's commitments in India made her inherently incapable of giving this country a truly democratic constitution The idea of merging the princes' territories into the country's wider unity and of evolving a pattern of

[43]Professor Keith wrote. "The difficulties of dyarchy were clearly exposed in the provinces under the Act of 1919, and there is no reason to suppose that they will not be repeated in the federation As will be seen, the composition of the legislature is adapted to render it very difficult to secure the basis of an effective ministry, and that may assist the Governor-General to secure the assertion of the great authority vested in him The position of the ministry is deeply affected by the exclusion from its control of the most important expenditure, that on defence, and it may well prove that through this limitation of power responsibility cannot be established effectively". (*A Constitutional History of India,* (1937), page 388)

government genuinely responsive to popular opinion was far too revolutionary to be translated into action. It was the realisation of the manifest limitations of foreign rule that prompted Mahatma Gandhi to coin the revolutionary 'Quit India' slogan in 1942. The withdrawal of the British alone made the framing of the Constitution of 1950 possible.[44] It is pointed out that Indians have not hesitated to make use of the Act of 1935 as an 'invaluable quarry' for constructing the new edifice of government, despite their vehement opposition to the older statute. There is no doubt that the framers of free India's constitution did not hesitate to draw copiously from all sources, including the discredited Act, on the valid ground that not to benefit by the experience of others is to court intellectual atrophy. But this fact does not make an essentially bad constitutional instrument a good one. The Act of 1935 was unacceptable to India, not because every clause and section in it was bad, but because it sought to give only the shadow of power to the Indians, retaining the substance in the hands of the agents of the British Government. If, for instance, Defence and foreign affairs had been transferred to popular control, if the federation had been conceived as an association between like-minded and progressive units, if the electorate had not been cut into mince-meat and if the Governor-General and the Governors were required to play the role of constitutional mentors, there would have been no occasion for India to reject a constitution that contained such democratic features. In any case, the provisions adopted by free India from the older document relate only to the structural part of the statute and not to its basic contents.

Willingdon's Viceroyalty, which ended in April 1936, was notable, not for his personal achievement, but on account of the unceasing activity in London concerning the Indian

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[44]Commenting on the Act of 1935, Edward Thompson wrote. 'It is so difficult to keep patience while considering it.' Churchill, whose attitude to Indian reforms was one of unflagging hostility, wrote that the Indian statute was 'a gigantic quilt of jumbled crochet work, a monstrous monument of sham built by pigmies'. (*Nine Troubled Years* by Templewood, page 100).

constitutional reforms. His own contribution to the reform proposals was, however, negligible. He would perhaps have been happy and at his best, if during the five years of his lustrum he had nothing more serious to do than to infect those that came near him with his personal charm and suaveness. But throughout this period he was called upon to meet the challenge of Indian nationalism which he did with unexampled severity. He had none of Irwin's susceptibilities to restrain him from adopting measures that were so incongruous at a time when the transfer of power was being seriously discussed Perhaps, it was part of the strategy of Willingdon and his subordinates to forewarn Indians about the futility of expecting large concessions by a display of unusual severity when dealing with the Congress revolt There is, however, no doubt that a new phase in the Indian history began with the end of Willingdon's regime. With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Indian question ceased to be Britain's domestic concern and was raised to the plane of international politics and of post-war settlement.

13. *LORD LINLITHGOW*

LORD Linlithgow came to India with the determination to hasten the enforcement of the Act of 1935. He was not a stranger either to the country or its problems. He had toured it extensively as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Agriculture and even after his assumption of office continued to take deep interest in Indian farming and animal husbandry. By presiding over the deliberations of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1933-34, he knew the complexity of the new Indian statute, the provisions of which could be depended upon to ensure the continued retention of real power in British hands. He was, therefore, anxious to impose the Act on India without much loss of time so that Whitehall could be saved at least for some years the trouble and worry of making new constitutional proposals.

It was, however, necessary to enlist the co-operation of the princes in order to bring the federal part of the constitution into operation. The task, as Linlithgow soon discovered, was not an easy one. The initial enthusiasm of the rulers for federation, so lavishly displayed at the First Round Table Conference, had long cooled off following a more careful appraisal of its implications. The fact that they were no more than the protected feudatories of the British Government made no difference to their hostility to any constitutional proposals that required the transfer of some of their so-called sovereign powers to a central government. If not they, at least some of their advisers were apt pupils of Bodin who declared: 'The essence of sovereignty is the power to give orders to all and to receive orders from none.' Since accession to an all-India federation involved running counter to this dictum, the princes believed that both their safety and independence lay in keeping clear of all such arrangements.

The princes' ministers played no small part in hardening their attitude to accession. A Committee of fifteen mem-

bers, presided over by Sir Akbar Hydari, had been appointed to give its detailed consideration to the provisions of the statute in relation to the states long before it was passed by the British Parliament. The Committee was determined to out-Herod Herod and, at a conference of the princes and their representatives held in Bombay in February 1935, it levied a series of objections to federation which it was impossible for even the most accommodating British Government to meet. Linlithgow, who was convinced that it was in the best interests of the Princely Order itself that the federal scheme should be implemented forthwith, commissioned Sir Courtenay Latimer, Sir Francis Wylie and Sir Arthur Lothian, all of the Political Service, to visit the states as his emissaries and discuss with the rulers and their ministers the procedure and the meaning of accession. The visiting officers discovered that the princes were in no mood to comply with the Viceroy's wishes and that they viewed their participation in an all-India polity as a grave potential threat to their very safety and 'sovereignty'. The emissaries, therefore, urged that further concessions should be offered to the states as an inducement to their early accession.

The princes' obstinacy was truly amazing. In November 1938, they declared that 'in the fast changing circumstances of the country', it would be impossible for them and their successors to 'discharge their duties to the Crown, to their dynasties and to their peoples' without the aid of specific and effective safeguards. When in January 1939, the Viceroy, whose patience had presumably been sorely tried by now, sent them a revised instrument of accession designed to allay their apprehensions, their reactions were equally unhelpful. At another conference held in Bombay they and their advisers adopted a resolution declaring that the modified terms were also 'fundamentally unsatisfactory' and so unacceptable to them. The Viceroy pleaded in vain with them to withdraw their opposition to the scheme. Addressing the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes on August 21, Linlithgow said that he would not have recommended federation to the states if he had not

been satisfied in his own mind that it effectively secured their full and future safety. 'The offer,' he declared, 'embodies the safeguards which His Majesty's Government regard as appropriate and sufficient for that purpose. The federation is one in which the Princely Order will carry a very substantial voice —125 seats, or one-third in the Lower House, and 104 seats, or two-fifths, in the Upper House. *This has always seemed to me a bloc which if the Princely Order are wise and hold together no political party can possibly afford to ignore.*'[1] (Italics mine).

To the great misfortune of the princes and their overlords, the former failed to realise where their best interests lay. The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 made the pursuit of the negotiations both unnecessary and impossible. In any case, the princes could be trusted to rally behind the British Government in the hour of its need, with their customary devotion and thoroughness. On September 11, Linlithgow announced that 'the compulsion of the present international situation' called for the suspension of the work 'in connection with preparations for federation'. Thus, the monumental efforts that had gone into the rearing of the federal structure ended in nothing, much to the regret of those who knew its value to the empire. 'Here,' says a writer, 'was pre-eminently a case for striking while the iron was hot, but it was cold indeed before the Viceregal hammer began to descend in 1939.'[2] Linlithgow's over-scrupulous regard for the Princes' susceptibilities was largely responsible for the plan of an all-India federation returning to 'the clouds in which the Montagu-Chelmsford and Simon Reports descried it.'

The provincial part of the Act of 1935, however, escaped the unhappy fate of the federation. There was indeed no responsible section of opinion in the country which endorsed the scheme for the Centre. While dismissing the

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[1] *SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS BY THE MARQUESS OF LINLITHGOW*, 1936-43, Government of India, 1945, pp.196, 197.

[2] *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p 815.

entire Act as a 'slave Constitution', Nehru concentrated his indictment on the federal part. Acceptance of office by Congress, he explained, meant a 'fight against the coming of federation by all means in our power, inside as well as outside the legislatures'. Jinnah was even more forthright in his condemnation. The federal plan, he said, was completely vitiated by the 'impossible terms which the Princes have laid down'. He added. 'I believe that it means nothing but the absolute sacrifice of all that British India has stood for and developed in the last fifty years in the method of progress in the representative form of Government.'[3] The Sapru Committee, distinguished for its moderation, condemned the constitution on the ground that 'no party or body of organised opinion was prepared to welcome it mainly because it fell far short of everybody's reasonable expectations and was stuffed with safeguards, reservations and special responsibilities which very largely circumscribed the field of ministerial responsibility'.[4] Mahatma Gandhi gave the *coupe de grace* to the Act by telling the Viceroy that he had not read it at all.

Nevertheless, the Congress decided to enter the constitutional arena with the two-fold object of drawing the maximum benefit from the provincial administration and of combating federation in its existing form It accordingly contested the general elections of 1936-37 with its customary thoroughness, the results proving beyond a shadow of doubt that it was indeed the most representative and powerful political organisation in the country. The thoroughness of the Congress electioneering campaign astonished many observers Commenting on the organising abilities shown by it in the United Provinces Sir Harry Haig, Governor of the province from 1934-1939, declared: 'As the time for election approached, they developed their activities, not spasmodically but continuously, through their resident workers in every village......The

[3]Coupland Prof. R, *THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEM IN INDIA*, Part II, Oxford University Press, pp 9, 10.

[4]*CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS OF THE SAPRU COMMITTEE*, p 22

sense of impending change awakened the villages. The Government, which had in past agitations opposed the Congress with the weight of its authority, now stood inactive. It was too much to expect that the villager would understand the constitutional necessity for this attitude. He felt that the British Raj was weakening, that the Congress Raj was coming and, as so often happens, threw himself definitely on what seemed to be the winning side.' The villager, though unlettered, was endowed with a robust commonsense that suggested to him that it was both in his own and in the wider interests of the country that he should support the Congress.

In consequence, the electoral victory of the Congress was overwhelming. Of the 1,585 seats, it won 711 which was acclaimed as a remarkable feat "The Congress sweep," says Prof Brecher, "is all the more impressive when it is borne in mind that of the 1,585 seats less than half, 657, were 'general' or open, that is, not allotted to a separate, closed electoral group. The balance was fragmented among Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans, Landholders and others."[5] Out of 485 Muslim seats, the Congress contested 58 and won 26 or 46 per cent. of them and regretted in later years that it did not put up more candidates in the Muslim constituencies The Muslim League was able to capture 108 seats, its influence being felt mostly in the non-Muslim provinces. 'Its strength,' say Sir Maurice Gwyer and Appadorai, 'was so limited in all the Legislatures that it could not play an effective part in any Province.'[6] And yet so powerful was the impact of the Second World War and the British policy on Indian politics that in exactly one short decade the Muslim League succeeded in securing the partition of India and in obtaining a separate sovereign nationhood for the seceding areas

[5]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p.229.

[6]Selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, *SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, Oxford University Press, 1957, p.xlvi.

In spite of its great success at the polls, thus vindicating its claim that it was the real representative of the Indian people, the Congress was most cautious about office acceptance. The Governors of the provinces had been endowed with a plenitude of powers which, if they so chose, they could exercise to the detriment of the popular ministries. The Congress had long been *persona non grata* with the British Indian Government and its acceptance of responsibility was apt to provoke jealousies and antagonisms. Moreover, there was an obvious danger in accepting office without power. The Congress, therefore, directed in a resolution adopted in March 1937 that ministerships should not be accepted unless 'the leader of the Congress party in the legislature is satisfied and is able to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of Ministers in regard to their constitutional activities'. By this demand the Congress certainly did not ask that the Governors should divest themselves of the special powers that had been conferred on them by the statute, but urged that they should not be used with impunity in order to thwart the initiative and enterprise of the ministers.

A good deal of learned debate was conducted in the press and on the platform both in India and in England on the rights and wrongs of the Congress demand and it was not till the middle of the year that the Viceroy saw the need for allaying the apprehensions of the Congress leaders. In a message dated June 22, 1937, he explained that there was no 'foundation for any suggestion that a Governor is free, or is entitled, or would have the power, to interfere with the day-to-day administration of a Province outside the limited range of the responsibilities specifically confined to him Before taking a decision against the advice of his ministers even within that limited range a Governor will spare no pains to make clear to his ministers the reasons which have weighed with him in thinking both that the decision is one which it is incumbent on him to take, and

that it is the right one'.[7] Linlithgow's elucidation of the constitutional position satisfied the Congress, whose executive decided on July 7 that 'Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto'. At the same time, the Working Committee urged that the assumption of govermental responsibility by the Congress did not in any way affect its predetermined policy of 'combating the new Act on the one hand and prosecuting a constructive programme on the other'.

In July, the Congress formed its ministries in Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. A little later, the North-West Frontier Province came under its control, while in October of the following year, a Congress coalition ministry was formed in Assam. All the eight ministries remained in office till October 1939 when they resigned on the issue of Britain's war and peace aims with reference to India's independence. With one or two exceptions, they worked with great zeal, ability and understanding, thus demonstrating the exisence of 'constructive statesmanship in the Congress ranks'. C. Rajagopalachari in Madras, Gobind Ballabh Pant in the United Provinces, B. G. Kher in Bombay and Dr. Khan Saheb in the North-West Frontier Province showed themselves to be men of outstanding calibre and guided the fortunes of their respective provinces with great skill and discernment The tasks that devolved upon the Congress ministries were none too easy. First, they were brought face to face with a constitution that gave them no great scope for adopting far-reaching social and economic programmes. Secondly, the resources that were made available to them were severely limited because, as the Congress President, Nehru, stated in November 1937, they were 'largely mortgaged in favour of British imperialism and other interests'.[8] Thirdly, the officials, who bore no goodwill towards the Congress, could not in the nature

[7] *LINLITHGOW'S SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS*, Government of India, 1945, p.80.

[8] *THE INDIAN ANNUAL REGISTER*, July-December 1937, Vol. II, p 334

of things he expected to share the enthusiasm of their new but unwanted political masters for the uplift of the common man. Despite these handicaps, the Congress ministries sustained their popularity and were highly esteemed for their sincerity and industry. The misbehaviour of a few cocks of the walk cast no reflection upon the integrity or the ability of the ministries as a whole. We have the testimony of impartial observers that their relations with the Governors and the officials were 'often surprisingly good' and that when they resigned in October 1939 there was 'widespread regret on both sides that the experiment came to an end'.[9]

The Second World War, which led to the withdrawal of the Congress ministries, inflicted great injustice and injury on India and her people. It caused an amazing distortion of her political life, vulgarizing it on a scale never known before. It imposed heavy hardships on her people, and the Bengal famine of 1943 will long be remembered with horror and shame. Even more serious was the disruption of the country's territorial integrity and the appalling consequences that flowed from it. Modern war is a serious affair and, as Aldous Huxley truly remarks, destroys more than individual lives. Indeed, it shakes 'the whole fabric of custom, of law, of mutual confidence, of decency and humanity'. India's concern with the last war, at least until such time as it was confined to Europe, arose from the fact that this country happened to be a dependency of the British empire. And precisely because she was unfree, Linlithgow considered consultation of Indian opinion a wholly meaningless and unnecessary formality before committing her and her people to the dangers and miseries of a modern and total conflict. Constitutionally, his action was perhaps unexceptionable, but it was neither just nor moral to call upon an alien people to expose their lives and limbs to be killed and maimed before telling them why they were required to make such supreme sacrifices.

[9]We will revert to the achievements of the Congress Ministries when discussing the Muslim League's charges against them.

would 'enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation' in the framing of a new constitution. He further gave an unmistakable indication of the shape of things to come by telling the Indian people that 'representatives of the minorities have urged most strongly on me the necessity of a clear assurance that full weight would be given to their views and to their interests in any modifications that may be contemplated.' His Excellency had no doubt in his mind that unless 'all parties and all interests in the country' achieved the miracle of speaking with one voice, the goal of India would always remain unattainable. So much concerning the future. About the present, he was authorised to establish a consultative group, 'representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes,' with the object of associating public opinion 'with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities'.

The Congress rejected the Viceroy's offer as categorically as it was made. 'What the Committee,' declared the Congress executive in its resolution of October 22-23, 'had asked for was a declaration of war aims as a test of Britain's *bona fides* regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups.' It pointed out that the demand for freedom was not for the benefit of the Congress alone or for that of any particular group or community but in the interests of all the elements of the population. Since the Viceroy's October announcement conceded nothing, the Committee could not 'possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations'. In another resolution, dated November 19-23, 1939, couched in more forthright phrases, the Working Committee interpreted the persistent attempts on the part of the British Government to avoid stating its war aims and its policy towards the Indian demand 'as a desire

to maintain imperialist domination in India in alliance with the reactionary elements in the country'. The resignation of the Congress ministries led to strange and startling developments, but before describing them it would be profitable to examine at some length what precisely it was that prompted Britain to wage the war

During the war years a good deal of literature was published on post-war reconstruction, urging that wars should no longer be allowed to destory and darken the lives of men and to expose civilization to the perils of dissolution. In a highly patriotic book, Ramsay Muir described the raging conflict as the 'noblest and the most idealistic war that has ever been fought. It is a war between the forces of evil, and the imperfect but upward-striving forces of good It is like the struggle between Christain and Apollyon in the *Pilgrim's Progress*—Christian burdened by a sense of his own shortcomings, but with his face turned towards the light; Apollyon, the very embodiment of evil, rejoicing in his own wickedness, and using every device of cunning and treachery to wear down his foe'.[11] Bertrand Russell, who as Gandhi did, abhors war, violence and wickedness, quoting Clausewitz with approval, namely, that 'war is nothing but the continuation of policy by other means', wrote that since war was not a convulsion of nature but the result of human volition, it could be permanently discarded by a wise and just adjustment of human affairs 'Are we then,' he asked 'to accept fatalistically the conclusion that war is inevitable?' and added 'I do not take this view'[12] H G Wells, lending his support to the Sankey Declaration of 1940 pleading for eleven human rights, including the Right to Live, Right to Knowledge, Freedom of Thought and Worship, Right to Work, Freedom of Movement, Personal Liberty and Freedom from Violence, urged that practical steps should be taken to enforce those Rights and Freedoms soon after the war.

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[11]Muir Ramsay, *CIVILIZATION AND LIBERTY*, Jonathan Cape, 1940, pp 282, 283.

[12]Russell Bertrand, *WHICH WAY TO PEACE?* Michael Joseph, 1936, p 13.

in Manchuria and *defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan'*[17] (Italics mine). But the same country became an object of unrestrained abuse when it launched its great assault on the British possessions in the East during the second World War. Expressive slogans were coined and shouted against the invaders, one of them being: 'Blow the Jap off the map with salvage and scrap!' In a world broadcast on August 24, 1941, Churchill pronounced his anathema on the Japanese in these words: "For five long years the Japanese military factions, seeking to emulate the style of Hitler and Mussolini, taking all their posturing as if it were a new European revelation, have been invading and harrying the 500,000,000 inhabitants of China. Japanese armies have been wandering about that vast land in futile excursions, carrying with them carnage, ruin and corruption and calling it the 'Chinese Incident' ".[18]

The British Government's attitude towards the second World War was thus animated by no high purpose Ignoring Burke's wise remark that 'war never leaves where it found a nation', it concerned itself solely with the problem of the survival of its own country and Empire. While the heroic defence of England by her people won the unstinted admiration of the entire world, the manner in which the British Government set about playing up India's domestic differences found no favour in any of the Allied countries. Many fair-minded Englishmen and nearly all thinking Americans asked with what conviction freedom could be fought for while India remained unfree British friends of this country went a step further and maintained 'Our statesmanship in India makes plain the urgency of the awakening of a new spirit in British political life.' But such considerations never weighed with Whitehall which, as we shall see presently, made an unabashed use of the

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[17]Mackintosh John, *THE PATHS THAT LED TO WAR*, Blackie, 1940, p 206.

[18]Churchill Sir Winston, *GREAT WAR SPEECHES* (A Transworld Publication), 1958, p 159.

communal forces in India to thwart her national aspirations.

The story of the growth of the Muslim League during the second World War into the most formidable communal organisation and its success in mulcting large areas from the territorial sovereignty of India makes astounding reading. The feat, which in ordinary circumstances would have been impossible, could be performed only by Mohamed Ali Jinnah, whose career as a national and communal leader would make a rewarding study in psychology. Jinnah had been a prominent nationalist leader when the politics of the country ran along the smooth path of constitutionalism The intellectual eminence and integrity of Gokhale, his temperate political views and his studied avoidance of extremes had deeply influenced the young Muslim who, for some time, cherished the ambition of fashioning his own career on the lines of that of the great exemplar of moderation and constitutionalism. But, apart from the early death of his hero in 1915, Jinnah's aspirations in that direction were short-lived and impracticable. Though of Olympian stature, Gokhale never behaved or functioned like one In contrast, the hallmark of Jinnah's personality was self-esteem and an abiding faith in his own wisdom and superiority The advent of new leaders to Indian nationalism, their radical departure from the customary methods of ventilating the country's grievances and their growing influence with the masses of the people were developments with which he could not readily reconcile himself. The phenomenal growth in the popularity of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru was not to the liking of Jinnah who presumably felt that they had usurped his rightful place in the country's public life

Nothing, however, prevented him from joining hands with Gandhi and Nehru and thus help in the creation of a trimuvirate, but he could make no such contribution unless he too was prepared to undergo the ordeals and sacrifices which participation in the dynamic politics demanded. His upbringing and temperament made it impossible for him to exchange comfort and luxury for the rough and

tumble of a resurgent nationalist movement. Jinnah was not exactly born in the bosom of poverty, but he certainly did not grow in opulent circumstances.[19] Belonging to a large family and spending his boyhood in uncongenial and crowded surroundings, he vowed to raise himself by his own bootstrap and succeeded in doing so beyond his most sanguine expectations. A self-made man, he began to ride on the crest of prosperity and accustomed himself to a new style of living which he was determined not to surrender for any reason. And since in an awakened India, political laurels could be won only through suffering and sacrifice, he found himself outstripped by men like Gandhi and Nehru in the race for national leadership. This perhaps explains why even normal courtesies were withheld from them in his political controversies with them.

The war and the British Government gave Jinnah his opportunity. Both stimulated in him in the evening of his life the belief that he was a man of destiny. Though always conscious of his own importance, he was burdened with no such sense of mission before. The fact that he had retired to England and set up practice before the Privy Council in London furnishes the most convincing proof that he had sincerely persuaded himself that there was no more use for him in India It is not clear why he returned to this country in 1935, but whatever the reason, the call of the motherland could not have been the paramount one.[20] He found in the Muslim League a convenient instrument for advancing his ideas and ideals as well as his ambitions. The refusal of the Congress to form a coalition ministry

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[19]Mrs. Sarojini Naidu believed and wrote that Jinnah was born of wealthy parents. Many other writers have made the same mistake

[20]The following passage from Louis Fisher's book *Gandhi* is significant. "In an article on Jinnah in the London *Economist* of September 17, 1949, an author who obviously knew his subject, reported that while Jinnah was practicing law in London, somebody repeated to him that Nehru whom he despised and hated, had imprudently said at a private party that 'Jinnah was finished' Outraged, Jinnah packed up and sailed back to India at once just to 'show Nehru' . To Cleopatra's nose as a factor in history one should perhaps add Jinnah's pride' ". (Published by the New American Library, 1954, page 151)

with the League in the United Provinces after the elections of 1936-37 furnished him with the necessary *causus belli.* A good deal has been written on the episode and on Nehru's part in it. The demand that the League group in the province's legislature should cease to function as a separate entity as a pre-condition to the participation of its representatives in the Congress ministry was both improper and unjust. It was later conceded by many Congressmen that such onerous stipulations were not necessary, especially when the League's election manifesto had been as forthright and forward-looking as that of the Congress itself on all vital issues affecting the country.

But there was no warrant for the League or its supporters to magnify an obvious error of judgment as if the Congress was guilty of a grave crime. The League would certainly not have suffered political apostasy or extinction if the understanding desired by the Congress had been promoted After long decades of agitation and opposition, the Congress was launching itself upon the novel adventure of office acceptance and it was perfectly legitimate on its part to expect that the ministries formed under its aegis should function as a disciplined body and not like Plato's team of horses Taking a more realistic view of the episode, the Sapru Report says: 'There was no knowing when it (Congress) might have to resume the conflict. The maintenance of party discipline and solidarity was, therefore, considered as of prime importance. The theory of undiluted party government thereby received additional strength' The Report adds 'Personal disappointments brought factions and increased both the strength and virulence of opposition.'[21] The relations of Nehru, who has been unjustly condemned as the villain of the piece, with the U P. League leaders remained cordial long after the event. For instance, Choudhuri Khaliquz-Zaman, a prominent leader of the League in the province, wrote to Nehru an intimate letter on November 28, 1937 in which

[21] *CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS OF THE SAPRU COMMITTEE.* p 154.

he said: 'As soon as the Congress will embark on any active programme of fighting (against the British imperialism), I hope the League will not lag behind, but will fight in closest association with the Congress. Similarly, in regard to the work inside the legislature, the League has fully endorsed the Wardha programme and its members are bound to support it.'[22]

Thus the U. P. incident did not furnish the sole ground for the parting of the ways between the Congress and the League. Many more 'grievances' were added to make the charge-sheet against the Congress look formidable, but the real grievance against it was that, while it controlled eight ministries out of eleven, the League could claim none as its own. Jinnah, its President, took the earliest opportunity of giving expression to his chagrin and resentment. At the 25th session of the All-India Muslim League, held at Lucknow in October 1937, he declared: 'The present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy, which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the Governments in six provinces where they are in a majority they have by their words, deeds and programme shown more that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fairplay at their hands.' He then enumerated the 'grievances' of his co-religionists against the Congress Governments. He said: 'Hindi is to

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[22]According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the U.P. imbroglio arose, not out of the League leaders' objection to signing the agreement but on account of Nehru's refusal to give two seats to the League's representatives in a Ministry of seven members "This was", wrote the Maulana, "a most unfortunate development. If the U.P. League's offer of co-operation had been accepted, the Muslim League party would for all practical purposes have merged in the Congress" (*India Wins Freedom* by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, (1959), page 161). The terms to the League leaders in the U.P. were offered by Azad himself, who appended the following short note to the published statement· "It was hoped that, if these terms were agreed to and the Muslim League group of members joined the Congress Party as full members, that group would cease to exist as a separate group. In the formation of the provincial Cabinet it was considered proper that they should have representatives", (quoted in Prof Coupland's *"India· A Re-statement"*, page 294).

be the national language of all-India and that *Bande Mataram* is to be the national song and is to be forced upon all. The Congress flag is to be obeyed and revered by all and sundry. On the very threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for the Hindus.' By a resolution the League condemned the British Indian Government for allowing the formation of the Congress ministries 'in flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Instrument of Instructions'. The tenability of the charge-sheet can be best judged by recalling the fact that its necessity was discovered by its framers scarcely within three months after the acceptance of office by the Congress The best reply to the League's indictment was provided by its own former President, Sir Wazir Hasan,[23] who, in a letter to Nehru dated February 11, 1938, said: 'This propaganda of misrepresentation, lies and religious and communal hatred not only between Mussalmans and Hindus, but also between Mussalmans and Mussalmans was initiated in the presidential address of the Muslim League session at Lucknow in October last. It is being carried on from day to day with ever-increasing false statement of facts under the guise of the rights of the minorities and religious hatred.'[24] Earlier, at a meeting held on July 30, 1937, Wazir Hasan had declared: 'No other organisation except the Indian National Congress can speak on behalf of eight crores of Mussalmans. The Indian National Congress has come to be the united anti-Imperialist front of the Hindus, Muslims and other important and non-important minorities of this country.'

Since facts were not relevant to the League's campaign, formidable indictments were drawn up against the Congress and given wide publicity. The Pirpur Report, published at the end of 1938, that is, in less than 1½ years after the advent of the Congress to power, declared in all

23He was the Chief Justice of the Lucknow Chief Court.

24Nehru Jawaharlal, *BUNCH OF LETTERS*, Asia Publishing House, 1958, p 259.

solemnity that 'the Muslims think that no tyranny can be as great as the tyranny of the majority'—a truism that proved nothing against the target of the League's attack. In the following year, two more such accusations were published, one in March and another in December, reiterating the familiar complaints against the Congress. Challenges were repeatedly thrown out by Sardar Patel and the Prime Ministers of the Congress provinces to the League leaders to prove their charges, but it was no part of the strategy of their critics to respond to any such demand. Many Governors, who had first-hand knowledge of the working of the Ministries, bore unstinted testimony to the fair-mindedness and catholicity of the Congress ministers. Speaking in London, with Sir Hugh O'Neil, Under Secretary of State for India in the chair, Sir Harry Haig, former Governor of the United Provinces, said: 'In dealing with questions raising communal issues, the Ministers, in my judgment, normally acted with impartiality and a desire to do what was fair. The Congress administration on its constructive side has been inspired by enthusiasm, imagination and a considerable degree of idealism.' The London *Times* wrote that the Congress Ministers were 'well-disposed towards the Muslims', while Professor Coupland, by no means a friend of Indian aspirations, declared in his book *The Cripps Mission*: 'An impartial investigator would come, I think, to the conclusion that many of these charges (by the League) were exaggerated or of little serious moment, that many of the incidents complained of were due to irresponsible members of the Congress party, and that the case against the Congress Governments as deliberately pursuing an anti-Muslim policy was certainly not proved.'

In spite of the manifest untenability of the League's agitation, the Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad and Azad, sought to elicit from Jinnah, both through correspondence and by personal contacts, the precise nature of his complaints against their organisation. In order to clinch the issue, Maulana Azad, the Congress President, wrote to

Jinnah on October 5, 19[illegible] suggesting that 'the highest judicial authority in India' Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of the Federal Court, should be requested to report whether the Congress administration had in fact been tyrannical to the Muslim minorities. The League leader rejected the offer on the ground that he had placed the matter before the Viceroy who was, he said, 'the proper authority to take such action and adopt such measures as would meet our requirements.' It was, of course, too much to expect — and Jinnah evidently knew it — that the Viceroy would entertain any such extraordinary request.

Maulana Azad was a devout and scholarly Muslim who had made common cause with the Congress out of a profound conviction that only by adhering to the national organisation would the interests of his co-religionists be best protected. His verdict on the League's crusade against the Congress Governments has, therefore, a special value. 'I can speak,' he wrote, 'from personal knowledge that these allegations were absolutely unfounded. This was also the view which was held by the Viceroy and the Governors of different provinces.' Azad, who was a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board, with Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad as his colleagues, further observed: 'If there had been an iota of truth in any of these charges, I would have seen to it that the injustice was rectified. I was even prepared to resign, if necessary, on an issue like this.'[25]

All such controversies, however, proved futile with the outbreak of the war which brought new and intractable problems in its train. The League leader intelligently anticipated that the attitude of the Congress towards the crisis would inevitably place him on the pinnacle of negative power. On December 22, 1939, his party celebrated what it called the Deliverance Day to mark the 'emancipation' of his co-religionists from what it regarded as the monstrous misrule of the Congress and thus inexorably turned its back not only on the great national organisation

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[25] Azad Maulana, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, 1959, pp.21-22.

but also on an India as she was known to her children from time immemorial. With a candour unusual in a man of his reserved disposition, Jinnah said in March 1940: 'After the war was declared the Viceroy naturally wanted help from the League. Suddenly there came a change in the attitude of the Viceroy towards me. I was treated on the same basis as Mr. Gandhi. This was the severest blow to the Congress High Command. I was wonder-struck why all of a sudden I was promoted and given a place side by side with Mr. Gandhi. The answer was the All-India Muslim League.'[26] He, therefore, disdained to meet the Congress except on his own terms, especially when Linlithgow was so desperately anxious to cultivate his friendship.

Soon after the Congress divested itself of the responsibilities of government, a revealing correspondence began between the Viceroy and the League leader, both of whom set out to decide the fate of India with the full consent of the British Government. In a letter dated November 5, 1939, Jinnah asked the Viceroy that no declaration should be made by the British Government or any constitution enacted 'without the approval and consent of the two major communities of India, viz., the Mussalmans and the Hindus.' Evidently, it was still premature for him to declare that the Muslims constituted a separate nation. Being an astute man, he regulated his demands strictly in terms of the response he received from the other side. As will be seen presently, he soon dropped the Hindus from his consideration as an element that needed to be consulted when determining the country's future. Linlithgow, in his reply of December 23, assured Jinnah that 'His Majesty's Government are not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional developments in India. You need, therefore, have no fear that the weight which your community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be underrated.'

[26]In his book *Enlist India for Freedom,* Edward Thompson wrote: "The Moslem League has gained in the same fashion as Congress, since it became the Government practice to treat its President, Mr. Jinnah, as a kind of Moslem Mahatma", page 23.

The League leader had no doubt about the significance of the Viceroy's assurance, but the situation was so favourable to him that he demanded an even more categorical pledge concerning his community. He, therefore, asked in his letter of February 23, 1940 for a definite promise that 'no commitments will be made with regard to the future constitution of India or any interim settlement with any other party, without our approval and consent.' The majority community and the other minorities in the country were thus jettisoned from the political picture. Jinnah promised to throw the entire weight of his party on the side of the British Government in the prosecution of the war if the latter realised the wisdom of trusting the leadership of the Muslims, especially 'where the question of determining their own future is concerned.'

The offer was too good, and in the context of the Congress' hostile attitude, too invaluable to be treated lightly. Linlithgow accordingly drew Jinnah's attention to the passage in the Secretary of State, Lord Zetland's speech in the House of Lords on April 18. Besides declaring that a substantial measure of domestic unity was essential if the 'vision of a united India' was to become a reality, Zetland had asserted: 'I cannot believe that any Government or Parliament in this country would attempt to impose by force upon, for example, eighty million Muslim subjects of His Majesty in India a form of constitution under which they would not live peacefully and contentedly.' Commending this significant statement to the League leader, Linlithgow expressed his certainty that it was sufficient to remove 'any possible doubts on this point.'

There cannot be any doubt that the famous partition resolution, adopted by the Muslim League at its Lahore session on March 22-24, 1940, was the direct outcome of the open encouragement given to its leader to make whatever demands he chose upon the British Government. The Lahore resolution maintained that "no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz, that geographically contiguous units are demar-

cated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign." The resolution generously added that the minorities in those regions should be given 'effective and mandatory safeguards.' The session also authorised the party's executive to draw up a contitution 'in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary.' It was an ominous resolution, the very vagueness of which heightened its dangerous implications. No such scheme as the League had contemplated at Lahore was ever drawn up, but thenceforward the vision of a united India, with its constituent parts being effectively controlled by a principal central authority, dissolved into a chimera.

Jinnah did not allow the grass to grow under his feet. On May 27, he reminded the British Government about his party's good behaviour in the matter of war effort and pleaded with it 'to show trust in Muslim leadership—there are many ways of doing so—and, as confident friends, seek our wholehearted co-operation. And we shall not fail.' He followed up this plea by forwarding to the Viceroy's Private Secretary a comprehensive record of his discussions with Linlithgow on June 27. The document marked the crest of the League's separatist demands. First, it urged that the future constitution of India should be strictly in conformity with the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution. Secondly, to ensure a vigorous prosecution of the war, Muslim leadership should be treated as 'equal partners in the Government both at the centre and in all the provinces.' In the event of the Viceroy's Executive Council being expanded, Muslim representation on that body should be 'equal to that of the Hindus if the Congress comes in, otherwise they should have the majority of the additional

members.' In the provinces directly under the control of Governors, consequent on the resignation of Congress ministries, the same principle of parity should be followed or Muslim majority established if any change in their administration was contemplated. Thirdly, a War Council, presided over by the Viceroy, should be established and the Princes invited to take part in its deliberations. There too Muslim predominance should be ensured. Lastly, the Muslim representatives on all those bodies 'should be chosen by the Muslim League'. Besides seeking to degrade the Congress from the position of a national organisation into a sectional body and claiming for Muslims equal rights with Hindus, not as the citizens of a common motherland, but as a distinct and rival community, Jinnah demanded that the League, that is to say, himself should be treated as the sole representative of 'Muslim India'. Such indeed was the perversity of Indian politics in those stormy days that nearly all his pretensions were upheld

It is in the context of the growing amity and understanding between the League and the British Indian Government that we must study the implications of the Viceroy's famous Declaration of August 8, 1940. The Declaration reiterated the oft-proclaimed policy of the British Government that 'Dominion status was their objective in India' and at the same time called attention to the lack of unity in the country. 'Deeply as His Majesty's Government regret this,' the Viceroy said, 'they do not feel that they should any longer postpone the expansion of the Governor-General's Council, and the establishment of a body which will more closely associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war by the Central Government.'[27] Both these gestures were devoid of any substance and were certainly not intended to meet India's demand for the transfer of power. On the contrary, the Declaration contained certain passages that were calculated to provoke widespread protest in the country. Dealing with the Government's favourite theme of minorities, the Viceroy

[27]The Viceroy's Executive Council was enlarged on July 21, 1941. The National Defence Council also came into existence on that day.

said: 'It goes without saying that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a Government.'

Such studious attempts on the part of the Government to build up the League and its leader were intended to prevent India from coming into her own. That being the real reason, the Viceroy's assertion in his August declaration that 'fundamental constitutional issues' could not be 'decisively resolved' during war years did not carry much conviction. To recall Laski's wise words: 'In war the deed is the word.' Since England's great war leader, Churchill, enjoyed a plenitude of power, prestige and popularity, neither Parliament nor public opinion would have objected to his Government's doing a simple act of justice to India. As Churchill himself has observed: 'I doubt whether any of the Dictators had as much effective power throughout the whole nation as the British War Cabinet.'[28] Indeed, within one month of his assumption of the Prime Ministership, his Government had made the epoch-making offer of union with France. This historic proposal, made in June 1940, that is, during 'the most fateful moment in the history of the modern world', declared that 'France and Great Britain shall no longer be two, but one Franco-British Union'. The scheme envisaged joint organs of defence, foreign, financial and economic policies, besides laying down that every citizen of France 'will enjoy immediate citizenship of Great Britain. Every British subject will become a citizen of France'. If two sovereign states like England and France, which had a long record of mutual conflict, could conceive of such a revolutionary project and that during a period of mounting world crisis, it was absurd to contend that nothing could be done about India at the the same time.

[28]Churchill Sir Winston, *THE SECOND WORLD WAR*, Vol. II, Cassell, 1949, p.315.

The Congress indignantly rejected the August offer, protested against the Government's persistent denial of 'India's natural right to freedom' and started individual *satyagraha* under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the first person to court imprisonment under this novel movement being Vinoba Bhave, who has now become famous as the *Bhoodan* leader. Towards the end of October 1940, Nehru was arrested and was followed by many other leading Congress personalities. Non-party leaders, with a distinguished record of national service, met in Bombay in March 1941 under the presidency of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and called upon the British Government to end the deadlock by providing for the participation of representatives of all important elements in India's national life in the Viceroy's Executive Council by suitably enlarging its membership. It also urged that all important portfolios, including finance and defence, should be placed in charge of Indian members of the reconstructed government, with suitable safeguards for an unhindered prosecution of the war. The Conference further asked for a categorical statement that India would be raised to the status of a Dominion within a stipulated period. Even these moderate proposals were rejected by the Secretary of State, Amery, who speaking in the House of Commons on April 22, 1941 declared that he could not entertain the plea because "Mr. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, has since repudiated the scheme as being on 'entirely wrong lines' and as a trap into which Sir Tej has been led by 'Congress wirepullers'."[29] India's reactions to Amery's amazing performance were truly reflected in Sapru's statement of April 29. 'Bluntly put,' he said 'Mr. Amery is mortgaging our future to certain intractable leaders. Expediencies of the hour are not always consistent with lasting policies seeking to achieve the permanent good of a vast country like India.'[30] The veto conferred on Jinnah, however, remained valid only so

[29]Amery L S, *INDIA AND FREEDOM*, Oxford University Press, 1942, p 87

[30]Kulkarni V B, *IS PAKISTAN NECESSARY?* Hind Kitabs, 1944, p 40.

long as it was exercised in a manner that suited the Government. Indeed, 'minorities' was an all-embracing term. In another speech, Amery declared: 'The main elements in Indian national life include not only political organisations and the great religious and cultural communities of India; they also include geographical and administrative entities, the provinces of British India, more especially those which have not thrown away the responsibility for self-government, and the Indian States.'[31] Even God Almighty could not promote a community of ideas and aspirations if it was desired from such a maze of disparate elements.

But such disruptive manoeuvres could not stop the tide of Indian nationalism or relax the pressure of international opinion on the Indian question. Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, who visited India in February 1942, expressed his sincere hope in his farewell message that Britain would soon grant freedom to this country, since he was convinced that that was the 'wisest policy and one which will redound to the credit of the British Empire'.[32] Churchill's refusal to include India among the beneficiaries of the provisions of the Atlantic Charter was deeply resented by American leaders and people. America's interest in this county's freedom was sincere, sustained and totally disinterested and was prompted by her desire to become a great arsenal of democracy. Washington's point of view on the Indian question was vividly expressed in the draft *Aide Memoire* prepared by the Assistant Secretary of State, A. A. Berle, on May 5, 1941. 'India of necessity,' says this document, 'exerts a vast influence upon the affairs in the Middle East. Her status is of interest to all of the surrounding nations, and the degree to which and the methods by which she becomes integrated into a common co-operative effort of free peoples undeniably will affect the attitude of the

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[31]Amery L. S., *INDIA AND FREEDOM,* Oxford University Press, 1942, p 94.

[32]Kulkarni V. B., *IS PAKISTAN NECESSARY?* Hind Kitabs, 1944, p 40.

Middle East countries.'[33] Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, declined to accept Churchill's interpretation of the Atlantic Charter seeking to debar India from the benefits of its beneficent provisions. Earnest but unsuccessful attempts were made by the U.S. Ambassador in England, F. Winant, to dissuade the Prime Minister from giving public expression to his misreading of the document in his speech in the House of Commons on September 9. President Roosevelt's interest in the Indian question was equally profound and he discussed it with Churchill on all possible occasions. America's entry into the war in December 1941 inevitably raised the Indian issue to the international plane and lent greater urgency to its settlement Elliott Roosevelt records a long conversation between his father and the British Prime Minister and points out how the latter was worsted in an argument on the issue of the liberation of India and other British-held colonies.[34] Indeed, so decisive was the American pressure and so menacing the Indian situation, following the approach of the Japanese armies towards the Indian border, that even Churchill was compelled to send Sir Stafford Cripps to India with constitutional proposals[35]

Cripps, who held the high office of Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons, was an esteemed friend of Indian nationalism. He had lately won laurels as an astute diplomat by his successful negotiations with Stalin, the Sphinx of the Kremlin, and the Russian Government. His arrival in India on March 22, 1942 was, therefore, warmly welcomed. He had written to Nehru on October

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[33] *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES DIPLOMATIC PAPERS,* 1941, Vol. III, p. 177.

[34] Roosevelt Elliott, *AS HE SAW IT,* Asia Publishing House, 1947 pp. 36, 37.

[35] England could not wholly ignore America's advice on India Besides the desperate military situation, the war was rapidly impoverishing Britain whose economy and war effort could be sustained mainly through generous American aid. "England's balances", says Robert E Sherwood, "which had amounted to four and a half billion dollars before the war were gone, including the holdings in America of British individuals which had been expropriated by His Majesty's Government and liquidated" *(Roosevelt and Hopkins,)* pages 270-71.

11, 1939 warning him and the Congress 'against accepting anything short of action which proves conclusively the faith behind words. I am quite convinced that for the good of the British as well as the Indian people Congress should now stand as firm as a rock upon its demands'. He added: 'Unless the British Government make a much more specific and clear statement upon war aims than they have hitherto done and unless these expressed aims clothe with reality the empty phrases so far used, there will undoubtedly be a very wide and deep split in opinion in this country.'[36] During his previous visit to India, he had declared in December 1939 that the deadlock in the political situation 'could only be broken if the Viceroy started real negotiations on the basis of a firm British offer on generous terms'.[37] A man who could entertain such noble sentiments towards India deserved the wholehearted gratitude and affection of her people. Cripps was overwhelmed with both when he arrived in the country on his mission.

The draft Declaration, to which he was required to gain the acceptance of the Indian leaders and which was published on March 30, reaffirmed the intention of the British Government to create India into a Dominion enjoying independent and sovereign status both in her domestic and external affairs. Steps towards that end would be taken immediately after the cessation of hostilities. A constitution-making body would be brought into existence after holding elections to the provincial legislatures in the country. Representatives of the Indian states would take their full part in framing the constitution. The British Government would accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject to a few conditions. Those were that every province would be at liberty not to accept the new constitution, although the door would be kept open for its admission if it chose to come in later. The non-acceding provinces might frame their own constitution and

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[36]Nehru Jawaharlal, *BUNCH OF LETTERS*, Asia Publishing House, 1958, pp 386, 387

[37]Cooke Colin, *THE LIFE OF RICHARD STAFFORD CRIPPS*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1957, p.256.

secure for themselves the same status as the Indian Dominion. This provision really meant that the Muslim League would be within its rights if it demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims. Explaining the concession to the plea for the division of India, Cripps said that it was no use forcing an unwilling people to enter into an arrangement when they were antagonistic to it. Besides the option for the secession of provinces, the rights of racial and religious minorities were to be statutorily safeguarded and should become the subject of a treaty to be negotiated with the British Government. It was evident to the authors of the Declaration that any such stipulation was of doubtful value and yet they incorporated it in their offer. Like the provinces, the states could also decide to cherish their so-called independence in isolation, but it would be necessary to negotiate a revision of their treaties 'so far as may be required in the new situation'. All these arrangements were to take effect only at the end of the war. In the immediate present, when the Japanese were knocking at the door of India, the British Government had nothing to offer beyond an invitation to 'the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people' to participate 'in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations'.

The offer in fact did not advance India's cause or interests even by a single step. On the contrary, it conceded the principle of partition and the princes' right to take part in an all-India polity without shedding their autocracy or not to participate at all. Besides, it sought to tie the mill-stone of 'minorities' round India's neck even after she became free. Lastly, the 'concessions', envisaged were no better than a post-dated cheque, since nothing was conceded in the present. Nevertheless, largely on account of the amiable personality of Cripps, the Congress leaders, headed by Azad, held long discussions with him in the hope that any elucidations and explanations obtained by this means might succeed in infusing the breath of life into the dry bones of the Declaration. The points at issue were mainly two, namely, the extent to which the British

Government was prepared to transfer the responsibility for the defence of India to an Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Secondly, would the Executive Council be permitted to function as a full-fledged Cabinet without the Governor-General exercising his special powers in order to veto the decisions taken by it?

Cripps was at first inclined to meet the Congress demand on both these points, but he later changed his front when he discovered that he could carry neither the Viceroy nor the British Cabinet with him. The good offices of Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal representative in India, directed towards ensuring the success of the Cripps mission, especially on the issue of Defence, deeply offended Linlithgow. Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's friend and confidant, says: 'It was perfectly clear that the Governor-General was irritated with the whole business and laid great stress on the fact that Johnson acts and talks as though he were sent to India as Roosevelt's personal representative to mediate in the Indian crisis.'[38] Cripps himself dismissed the second issue relating to 'Cabinet Government' by informing the Congress President, Azad, on April 11 that 'without constitutional changes of a most complicated character and on a very large scale this would not be possible, as you realise'. In these circumstances, the Congress found it imposible to accept the Cripps offer. Azad, who took a leading part in the negotiations on behalf of the Congress, sums up the position thus: '(1) I now clearly saw that the British Cabinet was not prepared to transfer power to India during the war. (2) So far as the future was concerned it was possible that the British Government would, in the words of Cripps, consider the Indian problem from a fresh angle, but it could not be said with any certainty that India would become independent with the cessation of hostilities. (3) The result, therefore, was that if the Congress accepted the Cripps offer, it would

[38]Shirwood Robert E, *ROOSEVELT AND HOPKINS*, Bantam Giant Publication, 1950, p 102.

be without any clear assurance about the future of India even after the cessation of hostilities.'[39]

Cripps' behaviour during the concluding phase of the negotiations and after his departure from Delhi on April 12, 1942 caused great surprise to many. As the discussions proceeded, it became clear that the hide-bound scheme brought by him could not gain the acceptance of the Congress unless it was liberally interpreted, involving on his part a departure from mere persuasion to negotiation. But no such realistic approach was countenanced by Linlithgow who succeeded in seeking Churchill's intervention against futher negotiations.[40] Cripps was both crest-fallen and angry and was shocked to find that all his arduous labour was completely wasted.[41] But he was a man of great self-discipline and being a good Englishman, chose to keep counsel to himself on the real cause of the fiasco. He was, however, unfair in seeking to foist the blame on the Congress, and his 'final appeal' to Nehru to rise above difficulties and to accept the British scheme unchanged was in the circumstances, irrelevant and uncalled for. He showed extraordinary naivety when he told the American people in a broadcast speech on July 22, 1942 that he had travelled 20,000 miles to India to offer her freedom which, to his great sorrow, she had refused to take Such propaganda was, however, not calculated to succeed, for Roosevelt himself, in a message to Chuchill, declared that the failure of the Cripps' mission was 'due to the unwillingness of the British Government to concede the right of self-government to the Indian people notwithstanding the Indians' willingness to entrust technical military and naval defence control to the competent British authorities.'[42] Writing to an English friend after the event, Nehru com-

[30]Azad Maulana, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, 1959, pp 53, 54

[40]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU· A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 79

[41]Cooke Colin, *THE LIFE OF RICHARD STAFFORD CRIPPS*, Hodder & Stoughton 1957, p 291.

[42]Shirwood Robert E, *ROOSEVELT AND HOPKINS*, Bantam Giant Publication, 1950, pp. 108, 109.

plained that Cripps was 'all the time the formal representative of the War Cabinet, in fact he was the War Cabinet speaking to us with a take it or leave it attitude'. This view was shared by Gandhi who declared that Cripps had become 'part of the imperial machinery'. Churchill's own role in this episode was revealing. He wrote to the Viceroy on March 10, 1942 that the scheme represented 'our united policy' and that its rejection by the Indian parties would fully vindicate the British Government in the eyes of the world. He added: 'He (Cripps) is of course bound by the draft declaration, which is our utmost limit. Moreover, he will give full weight to the military and executive position in which India is now placed.'[43] Thus a mission, which could render inestimable service to both countries by its success, ended in dismal failure.

Gandhi became disconsolate. He was seventy-two and his heart's desire to see India free before his death threatened to become illusory. If Britain could not trust Indians to assume responsibility for the defence of their own hearths and homes even when their country was faced with imminent danger of invasion by the Japanese, she could never be persuaded to do the right thing by it at any other time. Gandhi, therefore, considered that the period following the failure of the Cripps mission was the most opportune moment for telling the British to depart, leaving India to her own fate. The 'Quit India' slogan and movement were thus born out of popular frustration and anger. It was absurd and fantastic to call Gandhi pro-Japanese, as if he stood in need of lessons in patriotism. The 'Quit India' demand did not comprehend the withdrawal of Allied troops from Indian soil—a point of view that was made perfectly clear by Gandhi both in his writings and in his correspondence with world statesmen like Marshal Chiang Kai-shek and President Roosevelt.[44]

The All-India Congress Committee assembled in Bombay in August 1942 to consider measures for giving effect to the

[43]Churchill Sir Winston, *THE SECOND WORLD WAR: THE HINGE OF FATE,* Vol IV, Cassell, 1951, pp 190-191.

[44]Tendulkar D. G., *MAHATMA,* Vol. VI, The Times of India Press, 1952, pp. 143 and 145.

demand for the withdrawal of the British from India. On 8th August, all the leading Congress personalities were arrested and taken to prisons in different parts of the country before giving Gandhi an opportunity to justify before the Government his proposed popular movement. The sudden removal of the nation's leaders provoked deep resentment among the masses who reacted to official oppression with great fury. The widespread uprising caused considerable dislocation of normal civic life besides seriously hampering the war effort. Futile attempts were made to foist the blame for the violence on Gandhi and his lieutenants by concealing the fact that persistent denial of their birthright to the people, exemplified by the failure of the Cripps mission, was the most potent reason for infuriating them beyond endurance, especially when the negative policy of the Government was accompanied by repression. Long after the event, Nehru supported the 'August struggle' on the ground that 'if we had been passive then, I think we would have lost all our strength.'[45] A pitiful attempt was made in 1943 to pillory the Congress for the disturbances in the country by publishing a pamphlet called '*Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances—1942-43.*' A good part of the tract was filled with extracts from the speeches of Congress leaders with frequent comments designed to misrepresent them In his letter of January 29, 1943, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy thus: 'You throw in my face the facts of murders by persons reputed to be Congressmen I see the fact of murders as clearly, I hope, as you do. My answer is that the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of arrests already referred to. That violence is not any the less so because it is organised on a scale so gigantic that it displaces the Mosaic Law of tooth for tooth by that of 10,000 to one—not to mention the corollary of the Mosaic Law, i.e. of non-resistance as enunciated by Jesus Christ I can-

[45]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU· A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 294.

not interpret in any other manner the repressive measures of the all-powerful Government of India.'

To rouse the civilized conscience of the world on India's continued subjection, Gandhi went on a fast for twenty-one days from February 10, 1943. He was now seventy-three years old and his weak body could not be expected to survive such a long ordeal. Nine days after the fast had begun, an All-Party Leaders' Conference was held in Delhi when an urgent appeal was made to the Government for the release of Gandhi. Jinnah, who was invited to reinforce the plea, gave a characteristic reply. 'The situation,' he wrote, 'arising out of Mr. Gandhi's fast is really a matter for the Hindu leaders to consider and advise him accordingly.' The Mahatma was not released, but he ran the full course of the ordeal and emerged from it unscathed. In distant America, the prospect of his death was viewed with dismay. 'A vital question for the British to consider,' declared Cordell Hull, 'would seem to be whether they cannot deal more effectively with the situation with Gandhi alive than if he were dead and his supporters were claiming martyrdom.'[46] William Phillips, who was the U.S. President's personal representative in India at that time, was prevented by the Viceroy from seeing Mahatma Gandhi on the ground that the meeting 'would be exceedingly dangerous to the British-Indian situation!' In a report to President Roosevelt on the temper of India, Phillips wrote that the country was 'in a state of inertia, prostration, divided counsels, and helplessness, with growing distrust and dislike for the British, and disappointment and disillusion with regard to Americans.'[47]

All over the world momentous happenings were rapidly changing the fate of man and liberating new forces of both good and evil. In less than five years, India was to attain independent nationhood and yet great leaders that had laboured so hard and sacrificed so much for the realisation of that goal were condemned to continued inaction

[46] *THE MEMOIRS OF CORDELL HULL*, Vol II, Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, p. 1493.
[47] *THE MEMOIRS OF CORDELL HULL*, Vol. II, Hodden & Stoughton, Ibid, p. 1945.

in their places of detention. While Jinnah rejoiced that his objective of dividing the country was near at hand and proclaimed that 'there will be no greater happiness to me than to see Pakistan established during my life time,' the Viceroy saw no reason or urgency for ending the political stalemate. A meeting of non-Congress leaders was held in Bombay in March 1943 in an effort to promote a *rapprochement* between the Congress and the Government and permission was sought to enable their representatives to see Gandhi for consultations. The Viceroy turned down the request on the ground that 'so long as the Congress policy remains what it is, there can be no question of any alteration in our attitude towards the Congress' Men like Bernard Shaw had pronounced their verdict that 'the imprisonment of Gandhi is the stupidest blunder the Government has let itself be landed in by its right wing of incurable diehards.' It was precisely these men who presided over India's destiny.

Indeed, Linlithgow's supreme concern in India was twofold, namely, to maximise the war effort, no matter at what cost to her impoverished people, and to try and keep the country safe for the empire by stimulating the internal forces of disruption. In the single-minded pursuit of these two aims, nothing else mattered to him. In vain did Gandhi draw his attention to the 'privations of the poor millions due to India-wide scarcity'; nor did the spectacle of hundreds and thousands of lives withering away in famished Bengal move him to abandon his sterile policy. Fazl-ul-Huq, the Premier of Bengal, and after him Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin and his colleagues, were far too engrossed with their separatist politics to be able to give their undivided attention to the problem of famine and death in their province. Linlithgow would not intervene since famine and pestilence, the curse of mankind, came within the purview of provincial autonomy under the twice-blessed constitution of 1935! The result was that the total death-roll in Bengal from the famine, including the diseases that inevitably accompanied it, was reckoned at 1,500,000 people.

Linlithgow laid down his office on October 20, 1943 after holding India in fee for more than seven years. His contribution to the country during these fateful years was blood, tears, hunger and death. It is not known whether he had any moments of contrition after he left India. If he was ever overcome by feelings of remorse, he could well have said in the words of Bismarck, addressed to Treitschke: 'It must be confessed that our linen was not always the cleanest.' Some of his countrymen have, however, quite naturally pronounced a different and flattering verdict on him. One of his principal claims to fame, according to one writer, 'was his organisation of the Indian war effort'—a field of action where 'the mind of the administrator could range unhampered by personal vagaries and political perplexities.'[48] We may not deny the justice of this tribute, but it was of no account whatsoever in relation to India's hopes and aspirations. Nehru has painted a vivid picture of the Viceroy, although according to his admirers, he was endowed with 'encyclopaedic knowledge.' 'Heavy of body,' writes Nehru, 'and slow of mind, solid as a rock and with almost a rock's lack of awareness, possessing the qualities and failings of an old-fashioned British aristocrat, he sought with integrity and honesty of purpose to find a way out of the tangle. But his limitations were too many.......'[49] Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, whose wide and varied experience and moderation insured the soundness of his judgment, said about the out-going Viceroy: 'Today, I say, after seven years of Lord Linlinthgow's administration the country is much more divided than it was when he came here.'[50] Studied in the context of what has been stated in this chapter, Sapru's verdict on him is so conclusive that with it we may well draw the curtain on the Viceroyalty of this astonishing person.

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[48] *THE OXFORD HISTORY OF INDIA*, Oxford University Press, 195[illegible], p.[illegible].

[49] Nehru Jawaharlal, *THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA*, Signet Press, 19[illegible], p.[illegible]

[50] Menon V. P., *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA*, Orient Longmans, 1957, p.151.

14. LORD WAVELL

LORD Wavell assumed the Viceroyalty of India at a time when the country was in the throes of a grave political and economic crisis. He was a distinguished soldier and a man of letters. It was both his privilege and misfortune to assume the command of the Allied forces in the Middle East under the most trying circumstances and to face the full might of the German army under the formidable leadership of Rommel. Wavell's performance in the African campaigns has been the subject of high praise as well as of unreserved condemnation. Churchill, his political master whose greatness he readily recognised but the soundness of whose judgment on military matters he was loath to accept, dismissed him from the Middle Eastern Command on the ground that his reverses could have been avoided. Competent observers have, however, not accepted this verdict. 'For almost four years,' says a commentator of Wavell's African campaigns, 'an Arthurian figure, he was concerned with military problems of pure survival. With the same composed strength he had met triumph and disaster. He had directed the most extraordinary victory and had weathered the most humiliating defeat, known to British arms.'[1] Rommel himself conceded to his opponent outstanding abilities and recognized in him 'a touch of martial genius.'

The appointment of such an accomplished man of the sword to head the government of a country, whose distracted state of affairs called for the ministrations and guidance of an experienced and pacific administrator, naturally filled many people with grave misgivings. Wavell was the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army when the Cripps *contretemps* led to the widespread Congress movement of August 1942 If knowing a problem

[1]Woollcombe Robert, *THE CAMPAIGNS OF WAVELL*, 1939-1943, Cassell, 1959, p.207.

first-hand has its obvious advantages, excessive closeness to events is sometimes likely to warp one's capacity for bold and independent judgment. The fear of Wavell identifying himself with the disruptive forces in the country was not in the prevailing atmosphere altogether unfounded. But the new Viceroy soon allayed all such apprehensions both by word and deed. During his direction of the Indian administration for more than three years, he gave no evidence that he shared his predecessor's overpowering passion for empire. Wavell's horizons were broad which gave him a remarkable capacity 'for maintaining friendly relations with men of widely different character and politics, as well as of diverse races.'[2] It was characteristic of him that soon after the announcement of his appointment to the Indian office he decided to put off his uniform,—a thing, says a writer, Wellington and Kitchener could never have done.

One of the earliest acts of Wavell was to grapple with the Bengal famine with firmness and alacrity. He used the services of the armed forces for rushing supplies to the starving people and his effective measures contributed much to alleviate suffering and to check the spread of disease. The new Viceroy was a realist and was convinced that the material prosperity and security of India rested on preserving and consolidating her territorial integrity. In his first major pronouncement, being an address to the Central Legislature on February 17, 1944, he said that it was impossible to alter geography. 'From the point of view of defence,' he declared, 'of relations with the outside world, of many internal and external economic problems, India is a natural unit.' He was conscious of the gravity of the communal problem and of the Muslim League's clamant demand for a separate 'homeland' for the Muslims, but none of these considerations weakened his conviction about the wisdom of consolidating India's unity. He cited examples to prove the soundness of his thesis, namely, that 'two

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[2]Collins Major-General, R. J. *LORD WAVELL*, 1883-1941, Hodder & Stoughton, 1946, p.451.

communities and even two nations can make arrangements to live together in spite of differing cultures or religions.'

Apart from the inalienable right of Indians to become the masters of their own inheritance, the demand for the country's freedom was prompted by the no less important consideration that its people should have the fullest opportunity to plan for their prosperity. The economic goal was always paramount in the thoughts of the Congress leaders. To the extent permitted by the circumscribed provisions of the Act of 1935, the welfare of the common man became a major activity of the party when it assumed office in 1937. At a conference of provincial Ministers of Industries, held in October 1938 and presided over by the Congress President, Subhas Chandra Bose, decisions were taken to draw up a comprehensive scheme for the speedy industrialisation of the country. A Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Nehru, was appointed to prepare the necessary plans. This able body, which was in direct charge of the veteran economist, K. T. Shah, published a good deal of useful material on various aspects of India's material needs, thus providing valuable source material for future planners.

Planning indeed became the central theme of Indian thinking as the end of the war drew near. A brief but lucidly written scheme called *A Plan of Economic Development for India*, prepared by a body of distinguished industrialists, was published in 1944 and stimulated a good deal of lively debate on its recommendations.[3] The Bombay Plan, as it is more popularly known, envisaged an investment of Rs. 10,000 crores spread in three successive five-year stages. Calling attention to the appalling backwardness of the country, the poverty of its people, their illite-

[3]The scheme was drawn up by Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, J. R. D. Tata, G. D Birla, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Sir Shri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, A. D. Shroff and Dr. John Matthai. The pioneer of planning in India is Sir M. Visveswaraya, former Dewan of Mysore, who has consistently advocated the establishment of heavy industries as the only means of ensuring the country's rapid economic progress His ideas on the subject have been vividly explained in his book *A Planned Economy for India*

racy and the high percentage of mortality, the framers of the Plan urged that only through heavy investment in the economy and through a concerted drive to raise the living standard of the people could such scourges be effectively combated. They estimated that a *per capita* income of Rs. 74 at pre-war prices was essential in order to secure a minimum standard of living for the community. It was a modest goal and yet it was so distant, for the *per capita* income in British India at the time was only Rs. 65. A comparison of this figure with that of other countries in that period is illuminating: U.S.A. Rs. 1,406, Canada Rs. 1,038, U.K. Rs. 980, Australia Rs. 792, France Rs. 621, Germany Rs. 603 and Japan Rs. 218. Planning for a country like India, to the majority of whose people life was one of unrelieved misery and darkness, was thus not a luxury but an urgent necessity. The Bombay Plan, like every other responsibly sponsored scheme, however, held that the country's untapped resources could be best harnessed for the good of its people only by maintaining its geographical unity. 'Underlying our whole scheme,' wrote its authors, 'is the assumption that on the termination of the war or shortly thereafter, a national government will come into existence at the Centre which will be vested with full freedom in economic matters. The maintenance of the economic unity of India being, in our view, an essential condition of any effective planning, we have assumed for the purpose of our plan that the future Government of India will be constituted on a federal basis and that the jurisdiction of the Central Government in economic matters will extend over the whole of India.'[4] The Report of the Indian Federation of Labour, known as the *People's Plan,* urged with equal emphasis that 'a planned economy for India will have to embrace the entire country' and that the states of the princes should also 'join this endeavour for promoting the well-being of the people'.[5]

Wavell shared the anxiety of Indian planners to hasten the economic reconstruction of the country. He created

[4] *A PLAN OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR INDIA*, 1944, p.2.
[5] *PEOPLE'S PLAN,* 1944, p.10.

an additional seat in his Executive Council for planning and development and appointed Sir Ardeshir Dalal to take charge of the new Department. But, however generous his intentions, the task of galvanizing the economy of a country of India's size that had lain inert for some centuries could not be successfully undertaken by a Government that lacked the support of the people. It was indeed impossible to isolate the problem of India's political subordination from that of her economic stagnation and decay.

While the country was engrossed with debates and discussions on the new deal for the common man and the Government with making minor changes in the mechanism of its working, the men who alone could deliver the goods were still under detention. Students of history cannot miss the irony of a situation where the very persons that were to be called upon to take charge of the destiny of the country within a short period of three years were compelled to wear out their hearts in enforced idleness. The tribulations of Mahatma Gandhi in particular were truly heart-breaking. Soon after his arrest in August 1942, his trusted Secretary, Mahadev Desai, who was perhaps far more devoted to him than Boswell was to Johnson, passed away. Two years later on February 22, 1944, the Mahatma suffered another grievous bereavement by the death of his wife, Kasturba, a simple but lion-hearted woman, who had stood steadfast by her famous husband through all the stresses and strains of his historic life. In April, he himself was laid up with a particularly severe malaria which made recovery painfully slow. He was, therefore, released unconditionally on May 6 on medical grounds.

Gandhi lost no time in trying to end the political stalemate. Undaunted by the Viceroy's refusal to permit him to interview the members of the Congress Working Committee still under detention, he wrote to Wavell on July 22, offering to advise the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement 'if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made and a National Government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed'. He assured the

Viceroy that full support would be given for the prosecution of the war if the suggested changes were accepted and carried out. Wavell saw no reason to comply with Gandhi's demands, especially when the popular revolt was now well under control. In his reply of August 15, he pointed out the futility of aspiring for a settlement on such lines and maintained that a prior agreement between the Hindus and Muslims and 'all the important elements' was necessary before the formation of a transitional government could be considered. He further held that the success of even an interim government depended upon an understanding between these parties 'as to the method by which the new Constitution should be framed'. In other words, both the short-term and long-term settlement of the Indian question rested entirely upon the willingness of the intransigent sections among the minorities to surrender the right of vetoing the country's progress. Gandhi reacted to the Viceroy's unhelpful reply by declaring that the Government had no intention of winning public support. 'Moral support,' he said, 'they seem to despise.'

Having drawn a blank from the Viceroy, Gandhi now turned to Jinnah in the hope of finding a way out of the *impasse*. He wrote to the League leader suggesting that the two should meet—a proposal to which the latter agreed. The Gandhi-Jinnah talks of September 1944 mark an important episode in the history of contemporary India. Besides revealing how unyielding Jinnah had tended to become in his demands, they demonstrated beyond a shadow of doubt that India's political liberation should be sought, not in terms of her immemorial territorial unity, but on the basis of principles which in other countries, climes and circumstances would have been dismissed as rank heresies.

Gandhi attempted to negotiate a political settlement with the League leader, taking the draft scheme prepared by C. Rajagopalachari as the starting-point for the discussions. Famous as the C. R. formula, the scheme had been drawn up and shown to Gandhi during his fast in March 1943 and published in July 1944. The formula

envisaged an extreme form of autonomy to the predominantly Muslim-majority areas in the North-West and East of India, reserving for the all-India Government only such subjects as defence, commerce and communications and any others that could be determined by 'mutual agreement'. The arrangement would, however, become valid only if the Muslim League endorsed the 'Indian demand for independence' and co-operated with the Congress 'in the formation of a provisional interim Government for the transitional period'. The C. R. formula, which in some important respects was the precursor of the equally famous May 16, 1946 offer of the British Cabinet mission, was significant for provoking the bitter criticism of both the separatists and those that swore by India's unity. On July 30, 1944, Jinnah dismissed it as 'a parody, a negation of, and intended to torpedo, the Muslim League's resolution of March 1940' and added that it was the 'grossest travesty' to claim for the formula that it was adequate to meet the separatist ambitions of the Muslims.

It will be recalled that at its Lahore session in March 1940, the League adopted what is known as the partition resolution which declared that the Muslims would accept only such constitutional plan that recognised the 'basic principle', namely, that "geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India, should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign". Both before and after the passing of this resolution, many plans were put forward by constitutional experts, some genuine and the rest spurious, recommending India's division into two or more mutually exclusive, and perhaps warring, sovereign states.

It is not clear in whose fertile brain the idea for the country's division took its birth, but till the actual date of the partition in August 1947, nearly all the projects that

were put forward were either vague or recklessly extravagant. As early as 1919, Professor Keith had noticed pronounced separatist tendencies among the Muslims, following the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and commented upon them thus: 'Among the Muslims also there was propagated a wild but not negligible scheme for the creation of a Muslim State based on Afghanistan and embracing all those North-Western areas where the faith is strong. Such a state would inevitably form a permanent source of danger in India.'[c] Sir Muhammed Iqbal, acclaimed as the Poet of Islam, declared in his presidential address to the Muslim League in December 1930 that he would 'like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state' The formation of such a state appeared to him 'to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of Nort-West India.' A Punjabi Muslim lawyer, Choudhary Rahmat Ali, gave further impetus to the separatist movement by calling his co-religionists a 'nation' and by giving the areas proposed to be formed into an independent state the name of Pakistan, although Sir Sikander Hyat Khan in March 1941 and Jinnah in April 1943 adroitly foisted the blame for the currency of the name on their 'Hindu and British friends' Rahmat Ali, the indefatigable crusader for the two-nation theory, distributed the leaflets of his thesis among the delegates to the Indian Round Table Conference at London. Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan, who received the tract, dismissed the concept of a separate Muslim state as 'chimerical and impracticable'.

In 1939, the resourceful Dr. Syed Abdul Latif suggested the division of India into a plethora of 'cultural zones', four for Muslims and 'at least eleven for Hindus' and blithely envisaged a mass movement of populations to ensure 'cultural homogeneity' for his dream states! In the same year, two professors of Aligarh University, which from its inception has played an active role in preaching the gospel of Muslim separatism, put forward a scheme for the crea-

[c]Keith A B, *A CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF INDIA*, 1600-1935, Methuen, 1936, p 287.

tion of three states in India, namely, Pakistan, Bengal and Hindustan and prefaced their proposals with the pregnant observation that 'the Muslims of India are a nation by themselves. ....they have a distinct national entity wholly different from the Hindus and other non-Muslim groups, indeed they are more different from the Hindus than the Sudetan-Germans were from the Czechs'.[7] This is how the worthy professors taught their wards the value and virtues of unity, good-will and concord! In a long speech, delivered in the Punjab Legislative Assembly on March 11, 1941, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Premier, expressed his opposition to the formation of a strong central government and asked for a full measure of autonomy for the provinces, 'What the Muslims desire,' he said, 'is that where they are in a majority they should not be thwarted by anybody in the exercise of their inherent rights as a majority.' He was willing to concede similar rights to the provinces where the Hindus predominated. He however, recognised that there were certain matters concerning the whole country that could be dealt with only by an all-India body. For this purpose he envisaged the creation of an agency centre with the consent of the provinces to administer subjects of 'common interest such as customs, currency, defence and foreign affairs'. Sikander Hyat Khan was a patriot with strong provincial leanings and till his death in 1942, he never allowed the separatist politics of the Muslim League to gain ascendancy in the Punjab. He affirmed his political faith in the concluding words of his speech thus. "And let us above all show to the rest of India that we in the Punjab stand united and will not brook any interference from whatever quarter it may be attempted. Then and then only will we be able to tell meddling busybodies from outside: 'Hands off the Punjab.'"

Sir Sultan Ahmed's plan had all the original qualities of heads we win and tails you lose! According to him, there was to be a readjustment of the boundaries of the

[7] *SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai 1921-47, Vol II, p.462.

provinces in the north-west and the north-east so as to increase substantially the majority of the Muslim population in those areas. The provinces should be the virtual arbiters of their own destiny, while the Union of India should be entrusted with minium responsibilities. The Central legislature should consist of 40 per cent. Hindus and 40 per cent. Muslims, the remainder going to the Depressed classes and others. The Union Cabinet should have a similar communal ratio, with the additional provision that the Prime Minister should be a Muslim and a non-Muslim by rotation. Similarly, the Defence Minister should be a Muslim if the Commander-in-Chief was a non-Muslim and *vice versa.* The principle of parity should be maintained between the two communities in the matter of recruitment to the civil service, while representation in the armed services should be: Muslims 50 per cent and Hindus 50 per cent.[8] It is impossible to withhold one's admiration from Sultan Ahmed for his resourcefulness as a constitution-maker.

Professor Sir Reginald Coupland, who made a searching analysis of the various schemes for India's constitutional future, showed his own predilections for Regional Governments formed out of the grouping of provinces. Such an arrangement would dispense with the need for a principal government for the country as a whole, endowed with a plenitude of powers. There would in fact be only a 'minimal' Centre, most of its functions in relation to the provinces being taken over by the Regional Governments. It was sufficient if the principle of regional government was extended only to the Muslim majority provinces in order to 'gratify Moslem sentiment'.[9] This, like Sikander Hyat Khan's 'agency centre', was a constitutional novelty, and yet it furnished an essential basis for the Cabinet mission's proposals of May 1946. Most of the plans discussed here were either schemes for outright partition or were mere

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[8]*CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS OF THE SAPRU COMMITTEE,* Appendix VI, p xlv.

[9]Coupland Sir Reginald, *INDIA: A RE-STATEMENT,* Oxford University Press, 1945, pp.273-275.

variants of them, while none of them conceded the need for a Centre, not only reflecting a single Indian nationhood but assuming paramount responsibility for the security and progress of the country as a whole. Dr Ambedkar gave the *coup de grace* to the concept of India's oneness by advocating partition on what eventually proved to be the valid ground that only thus could the country be rid of the growing intransigence of the Muslim League[10]

It is against this background of an almost unanimous verdict of Muslim opinion against the unitary form of government that we should appreciate the significance of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks of September 1944. At no time did the founder of Pakistan consider it necessary to expound or elucidate in comprehensible terms the essential features of the new state, but as the supreme exponent of separatism, he was always remorselessly consistent in his hostility to the unity of India. His thesis, as disclosed by his conversations and correspondence with Gandhi, was three-fold and it is best narrated in his own words. To the question what distinguished an Indian Muslim from another Indian except his religion, Jinnah declared: 'We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definitions or test of a nation. We are a nation of a hundred million, and, what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions — in short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation'

Asked whether any common bonds were proposed to be retained between the parent and the seceding states, the League leader told Gandhi: "There cannot be defence and similar matters of 'common concern', when it is accepted that Pakistan and Hindustan will be two separate independent sovereign states." Jinnah refused to discuss the

[10] Ambedkar Dr, B. R *PAKISTAN OR THE PARTITION OF INDIA*, Thacker, 1946, pp 85, 95, 112, 239 and 260.

future of the Indian states, although they formed an integral part of India comprising 712,508 square miles with a population of more than 93 million people. Other points made by him were that only the Muslims, among the minorities, were entitled to exercise the right of self-determination and that his party alone was the 'authoritative and representative organisation of Muslim India.' Lastly, safeguards for the minorities would be negotiated and settled between them and their respective governments after the formation of the two independent states.

Jinnah's statements, it will be observed, were all in the nature of an *ipse dixit*, indicating no desire or anxiety on his part to conciliate or convince the other side by the force of argument couched in temperate and persuasive language. In later years, after the fulfilment of his heart's desire, Jinnah confided to Richard Casey, former Governor of undivided Bengal, and his wife that fanaticism had its own advantages. Casey records that at the dinner with the creator of Pakistan, his wife made "some comment about some one or other being a 'fanatic'. Jinnah said: 'Don't decry fanatics. If I hadn't been a fanatic there would never have been Pakistan'."[11] Nevertheless, the thesis, on the basis of which he mobilized his formidable antagonism to India's unity, is basically unsound. The Hindus and the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent are and have, since the advent of the latter's progenitors to this country more than nine hundred years ago, always remained and functioned as two separate religious communities, worshipping God in their own radically different ways. But at no time in the history of their relations did they regard each other as belonging to two separate nations. The differences in their outlook were not so fundamental or irreconcilable as to warrant any such belief. Sir Alfred Lyall, a prolific and well-informed historian, rightly asserts that, 'although the Indian people are broken up into diversities of race and language, they are as a whole not less distinctly marked off from the rest of Asia by certain

[11]Bolitho Hector, *JINNAH: CREATOR OF PAKISTAN*, Macmillan, 1954, p.167.

material and moral characteristics than their country is by the mountains and the sea. The component parts of that great country hang together physically and politically: there is no more room for two irreconcilable systems of government than in Persia, China or Asiatic Turkey'.[12]

It is true that India abounds in ethnic groups of some diversity such as the Punjabis, the Bengalis, the Gujaratis, the Marathas and the South Indians, but these have nothing to do with religion, for among them all there are both Hindus and Muslims. Iqbal, the Muslim poet, belonged to a family of Kashmiri Brahmins who had embraced Islam some generations ago, thus combining in his person 'some of the best characteristics of his race as well as of the religion adopted by his forefathers'. Sir Abdulla Haroon, who was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Muslim League, stated on April 3, 1940 that Sikander Hyat Khan's ancestors were Rajputs, while he himself traced his ancestry to a Lohana Hindu family. No less a person than the founder of Pakistan and the perfervid champion of the two-nation theory, Jinnah, was derived from a Bhatia Hindu family. 'It must be remembered,' says Professor Keith, 'that perhaps five-sixths of the Muslims of India are the descendants of converted Hindus.' During the September talks Gandhi reminded Jinnah about this fact by declaring: 'I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock.'

Indeed, according to every accepted definition of the word 'nation', Jinnah's claim had no basis in fact. Language plays an important part in drawing the line of demarcation between one people and another, although that distinction alone cannot transform a community into a nation. There are in India fourteen major languages which are spoken by tens of millions of people without distinction of caste, creed or race. The mother tongue of Jinnah and Gandhi was Gujarati, the language spoken by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, Nehru and the

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[12]Lyall Sir Alfred, *THE RISE AND EXPANSION OF THE BRITISH DOMINION* IN INDIA, John Murray, 1893, pp 283-284

late Liaqat Ali Khan, was, with minor variations, the same; Sikander Hyat Khan and Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs, spoke and wrote in the language of their province — the Punjabi. Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy, the Bengali Prime Ministers of Pakistan, are proud of their mother tongue, which is also the language of India's poet Laureate, the late Rabindranath Tagore, and Subhas Chandra Bose. In short, the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent speak no language which is also not spoken by the other communities. Again, in the matter of food and dress and manners and customs, the variations are essentially regional and not religious.

From the cultural point of view also, it would be incorrect to claim that there are two distinct and mutually exclusive types of culture in the country. Indian art and architecture and music and literature are the products of the united labours of both the communities. Even the great Taj Mahal, whose splendour and radiance are undimmed by time, is the creation of the combined genius of Hindus and Muslims. Explaining the reasons for the 'manifest architectural superiority' of Muslim monuments in India to those of Saracenic art in other Islamic countries, the eminent British authority, E B. Havell, says that 'in the eighth and ninth centuries of the Christain era, the time of the first Muhammadan invasions of India, the Hindus were — as both Alberuni and Mahmud of Ghazni bore witness later — the master-builders *par excellence* of Asia, and probably of the whole world'. Inevitably, the impact of Islam on this country stimulated new ideas and stirred the Indian architects and builders to new creative efforts. Havell further says: 'The Arabs, Tartars, Mongols, and Persians who came into India had much to learn from Hindu civilization, and it was from what they learnt and not from what they taught that Muhammadan art in India became great. *The Taj Mahal belongs to India, not to Islam.*'[13] (Italics mine). Earlier in the same book, the author observes: 'The Taj, the Moti Masjid at Agra, the

[13]Havell E. B., *INDIAN ARCHITECTURE*, John Murray, 1913, p.21.

Jami Masjid at Delhi, and the splendid Muhammadan buildings at Bijapur were only made possible by the not less splendid monuments of Hindu architecture at Mudhera, Dabhoi, Khajuraho, Gwalior, and elsewhere, which were built before the Moghul Emperors and their Viceroys made use of Hindu genius to glorify the faith of Islam.'[14]

It is futile to labour the obvious at further length. New nations are not born out of the pontifical pronouncements of politicians Nor is there any reason why India's integrity should not have been preserved even as the home of a plurality of nations. There are indeed few countries in the world whose populations are not mixed. The United States of America and Soviet Russia furnish outstanding examples of a multiplicity of nationalities living together as common citizens and being passionately devoted to their motherland. Britain, by no means a large country, has a population whose diversity is reflected by the Welsh, the Irish, the Scotch and the English. Even tiny Belgium cannot boast of a population composed of a single race. India is like a vast mansion and there is ample room in it for communities with diverse persuasions to live together in a spirit of complete harmony and concord. 'The co-existence of several nations,' says Lord Acton, 'under the same state is a test as well as the best security of its freedom. The combination of different nations in one state is as necessary a condition of civilized life as the combination of men in society.' Perhaps, the best answer to the two-nation theory is provided by Acton when he says: 'A State may in course of time produce a nationality but that a nationality should constitute a state is contrary to the nature of modern civilization.'[15] Jinnah could succeed in carving out a separate Muslim state from India entirely because fortuitously for him certain areas in the country contained populations with a Muslim majority. It is this fact and the solid support which he was able to secure eventually from his co-religionists, especially from those

[14]Havell E B, *INDIAN ARCHITECTURE*, John Murray, 1927, p 2.
[15]Acton Lord, *HISTORY OF FREEDOM AND OTHER ESSAYS*, 1909, pp 290-295.

living in the Hindu-majority provinces, and not his theories and doctrines that brought him victory.

Throughout the talks, Gandhi was forced to fight a rear-guard action. His modes of address and approach to Jinnah immensely enhanced the League leader's prestige, stimulating the belief among the Muslims that the 'Qaid-i-Azam' (great leader) was indeed their only doughty champion and 'deliverer.'[16] Maulana Azad has characterised Gandhi's September talks with Jinnah as 'a great political blunder'. He doubts whether the League leader would 'ever have achieved supremacy but for Gandhiji's attitude.'[17] A similar view is held by other writers, including V. P. Menon who says that the talks helped 'to enhance Jinnah's position and prestige amongst the Muslims generally.'[18] In the event, the position of the Nationalist Muslims became increasingly untenable, while the British policy of equating Jinnah with 'Muslim India' attained considerable plausibility.

Indian politics thus drifted towards a morass, escape from which seemed almost impossible. A solution to the communal problem was always possible if it depended upon legitimately felt apprehensions of Muslims. Jinnah and his party were crusading for a cause, to which any rational approach seemed impossible. But the indefatigable Tej Bahadur Sapru and his Liberal colleagues refused to surrender to a feeling of frustration. In December 1944, a Conciliation Committee was appointed to suggest a *modus*

[16]Jinnah was scarcely known outside India, with the possible exception of England. The Memoirs and biographies of such eminent Americans as Cordell Hull and Harry Hopkins do not mention him at all, while the names of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were widely known. Bernard Shaw, in his letter to Nehru dated September 18, 1948, has spelt a proper name curiously perhaps meaning "Jinnah" The sentence reads "I am wondering whether the death of Jinner will prevent you from coming to England". In the next sentence he says "If he has no competent successor you will have to govern the whole Peninsula". *(A Bunch of Old Letters,* pp 501, 502).

[17]Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM,* Orient Longmans, 1959, p 93.

[18]Menon V P, *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA,* Orient Longmans, p.166.

vivendi for overcoming the communal and constitutional tangle. The Committee, in its report published towards the end of March 1945, made recommendations both for interim and long-term settlement. It urged that the personnel of the Viceroy's Executive Council should be changed forthwith so that all its members, except the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, should be Indians commanding the confidence of their political parties in the Central Assembly. Popular regimes should be restored in the provinces where the Congress had held office but resigned. Meanwhile, Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress party in the Central Assembly, was making his own efforts to break the deadlock. Armed with a compromise formula, prepared in collaboration with Liaqat Ali Khan and claimed to have been endorsed by both Gandhi and Jinnah, he met the Viceroy's Secretary, Sir Evan Jenkins, on January 13, 1945 and the Viceroy himself on January 20, with proposals for the formation of an interim government. Desai's labours, however, ended in nothing following Jinnah's public statement disclaiming any knowledge of the Desai-Liaqat Pact. The Conciliation Committee fared no better, its distinguished members being dismissed by the League leader as 'handmaids of the Congress' who 'have played and are playing to the tune of Mr. Gandhi.'

While hurling such gratuitous affronts at esteemed leaders, Jinnah was supremely unconcerned about the reverses suffered by his own party in the provinces claimed by him as the 'homeland of the Muslims.' In the North-West Frontier Province, consisting of 27,88,797 Muslims and 1,80,321 Hindus, the League Ministry was dislodged on March 12, 1945 by twenty-four votes to eighteen and its place taken by the Congress under the leadership of Dr. Khan Saheb. In February 1945, the League ministry in Sind, under the premiership of Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, was sent out of office and probably would not have resumed it on March 14 if the politics of the province had been a little more stable. In Bengal, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin's League ministry was dislodged on March 28, the administration being taken over

by the Governor. The governing Unionist Party in the Punjab, consisting of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu members and headed by Khizr Hyat Khan as Premier, successfully kept the 'sword arm of India,' meaning the province, beyond the reach of the League. With the Muslims in a minority, the League's claim to Assam was, of course, baseless. Indeed, until the British Government announced the Muslim-majority areas as constituting the future state of Pakistan, Jinnah's hold over them was always uncertain and precarious.

It now became clear that no improvement in the Indian situation could be expected unless the Government itself took the initiative. In March 1945, Wavell proceeded to London to hold consultations with the British Government and to secure its approval to his scheme for ending the Indian political crisis. He returned to Delhi on June 4 to place his plans before the Indian public. On the 14th of the same month he broadcast his proposals which, he said, were designed 'to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government.' A political conference would accordingly be held in Simla on June 25 to secure the assent of Indian leaders to his scheme. Known as the Wavell Plan, it envisaged the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council which would consist entirely of Indian members, except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. The portfolio of external affairs, so far reserved to the Viceroy, would also be placed in charge of an Indian member, although the new Council would function under the provisions of the existing statute, namely, the Act of 1935. As in the Dominions, a British High Commissioner would be appointed to look after Britain's commercial and other interests in this country. If the proposed Simla Conference proved successful, democratic administration would be restored in the former Congress provinces in the form of coalition ministries. The Conference would also discuss the appropriate time when fresh elections to the Central and provincial legislatures should be held, while steps were being taken to release the Congress leaders held in detention since

August 1942 to enable them to participate in the deliberations On the same day, the Secretary of State, Mr. Amery made a statement in the House of Commons on similar lines. He explained that nominations to the Viceroy's Executive Council would be made in order to secure a balanced representation of the main communities, 'including equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus.' The proposed arrangements would not in any way affect the Crown's relations with the Indian states. He further declared: 'None of the changes suggested will in any way prejudice or prejudge the essential form of the future permanent Constitution or Constitutions of India.'[19]

The Conference, which assembled in Simla on June 25, was, however, foredoomed to failure It was manifestly unjust to stigmatize, even by implication, the Congress and other forces of nationalism as 'caste Hindus' and to weight the scale heavily against the preservation of India's territorial integrity by alluding to future settlement in terms of a 'constitution or constitutions' Before the commencement of the deliberations, Gandhi had warned the Viceroy that he would 'quite unconsciously, but equally surely, defeat the purpose of the Conference if parity between caste Hindus and Muslims is unalterable.' Parity between the Congress and the Muslim League was, however, the Mahatma explained, understandable. The Congress members to the Conference were led by the President, Maulana Azad[20] who, throughout the discussions, showed the greatest keenness and anxiety to promote a settlement. Jinnah, however, insisted that all the Muslim members of the proposed Executive Council of the Viceroy should be the nominees of the Muslim League—a proposition to which both Wavell and the Congress refused to agree. In his letter of July 9, addressed to Jinnah, the Viceroy expressed regret that he was 'unable to give you the guarantee you wish, i e that all the Muslim members of the proposed new

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[19] *SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION,* selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai 1921-47, Vol II, p 462

[20] Azad and his colleagues were released on June 15, 1945.

Council shall necessarily be members of the Muslim League. As explained to you, I cannot commit myself to give similar guarantee to any other party. I have to attempt to form an Executive Council representative, competent and generally acceptable.' Thereupon Jinnah refused to send the names on behalf of his party for inclusion in the Executive Council while all others had complied with the Viceroy's request. Commenting on the failure of the Conference, Maulana Azad says: 'I asked Lord Wavell to say in categorical terms whether the stand of the Muslim League could be regarded as reasonable. Lord Wavell said in reply that he could not accept the stand of the Muslim League as reasonable.'[21] The failure of the Conference was

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[21]In those days there was an amazing fall in the level of public debate and discussion. On June 15, the Muslim League's official newspaper *Dawn* declared that the Muslims would not "tolerate" the "infiltration" of non-League "stooges" in the Viceroy's Executive Council. On July 14, Jinnah condemned the Simla Conference in these unmeasured words. "There was the combination consisting of the Gandhi-Hindu Congress who stand for India's Hindu national independence as one India, and the latest exponents of geographical unity, Lord Wavell and Glancy-Khizr, who are bent upon creating disruption among the Mussalmans in the Punjab". (Sir Bertrand Glancy was the Governor of the Punjab, while Malik Sir Khizr Hyat Khan was the Premier). Jinnah's apprehensions were all-pervasive. Commenting on the proposed composition of the Executive, he said in the same statement· "All the other minorities, such as the Scheduled Castes, Sikhs and Christians have the same goal as the Congress. They have their grievances as minorities, but their goal and ideology is and cannot be different from or otherwise than that of a united India". By this candid statement, Jinnah unwittingly admitted that only he and his party had deliberately chosen to isolate themselves from the main stream of India's national life. Such an isolation inevitably influenced their judgment and sense of values. Jinnah's outburst against Azad proves the soundness of this conclusion "I refuse", he wrote, "to discuss with you by correspondence or otherwise as you have completely forfeited the confidence of Muslim India. Can't you realise you are made a Muslim show-boy Congress President to give it the colour that it is national and deceive foreign countries? You represent neither Muslims nor Hindus. The Congress is a Hindu body. If you have self-respect, resign at once" A scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge, a great Muslim divine, and a front rank nationalist leader, who suffered and spent many years in prison, Azad was universally esteemed except by the League leader and his followers.

in fact a great triumph for Jinnah It conclusively proved that he could now measure his strength with impunity not only with the Congress but also with the Government. Communalism had at last shed its swaddling clothes and had come of age. Seeing this, many vacillating Muslims saw great advantage to themselves in joining the gay crowds that swelled the League's ranks. Notable among those who were welcomed 'like lost sheep returning to their fold' was Abdul Qaiyum Khan 'who had not only been an ardent Congressman, but the Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly'![22]

The country was once again brought face to face with what might be called a three-dimensional problem, that is, the Congress insisting on an immediate transfer of power to an undivided India, the Muslim League demanding to be recognised as the sole representative of Indian Muslims as a prelude to the country's partition, and the British Government perplexed about the feasibility of formulating any plan capable of meeting such mutually irreconcilable points of view. But inaction was dangerous and inexcusable. The surrender of Germany on May 7, 1945 brought the war to an end in Europe. Churchill, the great war leader, and his party were surprisingly defeated in the general elections in Britain and the victorious Labour Party took office on July 26. With the entire might of the Allied Powers now concentrated on the war in the East, Japan was not likely to hold on longer. With Attlee as Prime Minister and Lord Pethick-Lawrence as Secretary of State, in place of L S. Amery, the prospects of an early settlement appeared bright. The surrender of Japan in August 1945 lent added strength to such optimism. In the same month, Wavell went to London for consultations with the new British Government and on September 19, three days after his return to India, announced that decision had been taken to hasten the 'realisation of full self-government in India.' Appropriate steps towards that end would be taken, including the creation of a constitution-making body,

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[22]Menon V P, *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA,* Orient Longmans, p.166.

soon after the general elections to be held during the ensuing cold weather.

The political parties in the country prepared themselves fully for the electoral fray. The Muslim League was best equipped for the campaign. It had in its possession the heady wine called Pakistan which was lavishly served to render the Muslim masses emotionally inebriate. It fought the elections, says Professor Brecher, 'on the issue of Hindu domination in a united India and the consequent need of a separate Muslim homeland, i.e. Pakistan.'[23] Incendiary speeches were made against the 'Hindu Congress' and the oppressions to which the helpless Muslims would be subjected in an undivided India. Commenting on the 'religious fanaticism and communal passions' provoked by the League's propaganda, Maulana Azad says: 'This clouded the political issues so much that Muslims who stood on Congress or any other ticket had great difficulty in even securing a hearing from the people.'[24] The results were hardly surprising. The League won all the thirty seats in the Central Assembly with 86.6 per cent. of the Muslim vote and 427 of 507 Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures, thus securing 74 per cent. of the Muslim vote. It was, however, not a trial of strength between the Congress and the League since the division of the electorates into communal constituencies made any such tournament impossible. Nevertheless, in the Muslim majority North-West Frontier Province, the Congress secured thirty seats, nineteen of which were Muslim as against seventeen captured by the League. Congress victories in the rest of the country were no less outstanding. It annexed 57 seats in the Central Assembly and secured 91.3 per cent. of the 'General' vote. A significant feature of the elections was the unexampled enthusiasm with which Muslims outside the 'Pakistan area' supported the League. For instance, in Bombay, the home province of Jinnah, all the thirty Mus-

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[23]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 304.

[24]Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, 1959, p.124.

lim seats in the provincial Assembly were won by the League and in Madras, it performed a similar feat by annexing all the twenty-nine seats In Orissa, all the four seats were claimed by it. Throughout the length and breadth of the country, the Muslims rode on the crest of sentiment and emotion and enthusiastically supported the League, untramelled by the sobering thought how the creation of a Muslim state in the north-west and north-east of India would benefit the Muslims in the provinces outside the two zones. A good number of them are, however, excellent performers and many of them have already found for themselves a secure place in the Congress ranks!

Jinnah was naturally delighted and not allowing the grass to grow under his feet, he convened a Convention of the Muslim League legislators on April 9, 1946 when resolutions were passed reiterating the party's determination never to submit to 'any constitution for a united India' and similarly never to 'participate in any single constitution-making machinery set up for the purpose.' The Convention further resolved that 'the minorities in Pakistan and Hindustan be provided with safeguards on the lines of the All-India Muslim League resolution passed on March 23, 1940 at Lahore.' Earlier, when interviewed by the British Parliamentary Delegation, which had arrived in India on January 5, 1946, Jinnah had declared that he would refuse to have anything to do with any interim government that did not give the League parity with all other parties,[25] an obvious improvement on his demand at the Simla Conference. Similarly, the partition of India and the setting up of two constituent assemblies should be conceded if the League's co-operation in any temporary political arrangement was desired. The Delegation, which was led by Professor Robert Richards, also met Nehru who, in the words of Miss Muriel Nichol, a member of the visiting team, stated the Congress claim for India's freedom 'without rancour or bitterness, and in a clear yet firm way' He was

[25]Menon V. P, *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA*, Orient Longmans, p 227.

'tolerant in his views and as broad in his outlook as I had expected him to be.'[26]

The resounding victory of the Muslim League at the polls and the vaulting ambitions which it stimulated in Jinnah did not in any way affect the urgency of unravelling the Indian political tangle. The trial of the Indian National Army personnel at the Red Fort in Delhi in 1945, with such legal luminaries and national leaders as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Bhulabhai Desai and Nehru constituting the defence panel, served as an eye-opener to all those who had still cherished the illusion that India could be held in duress. The revolt of the naval ratings in Bombay on February 18, 1946 and its widespread repercussions, especially among the armed forces, dispelled all lingering doubts about the necessity of effecting immediate transfer of power to Indians. Britain's own domestic affairs warranted the adoption of such a prudent course of action. A onetime world banker, she found herself after the war a country deeply involved in debts. Moreover, the rehabilitation of her war-ravaged economy called for the undivided labours of her people whom she could ill afford to send abroad in the impossible hope of restoring the glory and grandeur of her empire The war had bombed the *status quo* out of existence. Moreover, the pressure of Great Powers like America and Russia on Britain to release the dependent countries from her hold, as a step towards a new world order, continued unabated.[27] Independently of

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[26]Menon V. P, *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA,* Orient Longmans, p 228

[27]Even Attlee was peeved at American importunities on the Indian question "Our allies, the American people", he wrote, "had very strong views, shared by the Administration, of the evils of imperialism Much of the criticism of British rule was ill-informed but its strength could not be denied Americans drew a sharp distinction between their own expansion from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in voting the Mexican War and the relegation to reserves of the original inhabitants, and British overseas expansion The absorption of a continent seemed to be a natural process to them, but an empire containing numerous detached portions of land inhabited by various races at different stages of civilization appeared an example of colonialism and rank imperialism".

these considerations, the Labour Government was determined to do the simple justice of making India the mistress of her own fortune. On February 16, 1946, the Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, announced that a special mission of Cabinet Ministers consisting of himself, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, would visit India to initiate discussions with her leaders in order to reach a political settlement. It was a generous decision and was welcomed in this country with relief and gratitude.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in Delhi on March 24, 1946 Its members interviewed a large number of Indian leaders and laboured ceaselessly week after week in the torrid heat of Delhi and on the cool heights of Simla to promote an agreed settlement of the constitutional question Their efforts having proved abortive, they produced their own scheme, well-known as the British Cabinet Mission's offer of May 16, 1946. It is a closely-reasoned and lucidly-written document, which besides explaining the nature of the prevailing political deadlock, indicated the means by which it could be broken The Mission prefaced its proposals with a searching examination of the feasibility as well as the consequences of dividing India It pointed out that, outside the Muslim League, there was 'an almost universal desire' to preserve the country's territorial integrity. The areas claimed by the League, the Mission pointed out, contained large percentages of non-Muslim populations, which were in fact in numerical superiority in a number of districts demanded to be included in Pakistan Not only were there such non-Muslim majorities both in the Punjab and Bengal, but Assam could not on any account be assimilated into the 'Muslim homeland,' the populations of the respective communities there being. non-Muslims 6,762,254 and Muslims 3,442,479 The Mission, therefore, declared: 'Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan This point would particularly affect the position of Sikhs'

If the partition of India was inevitable, it would have to be on the basis of the demarcation of the non-Muslim-majority areas from those inhabited by predominantly Muslim populations. The division of the country was desired by none except by the League, but even this crusader for separatism, in total disregard of its own stand, refused to countenance such a panacea if it involved the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. 'We, therefore,' the British document said, 'considered whether a smaller sovereign Pakistan confined to the Muslim-majority areas alone might be a possible basis of compromise,' and added 'such a Pakistan is regarded by the Muslim League as quite impracticable.'

There were many other weighty considerations for not tampering with the unity of India, but the Cabinet Mission could not ignore the Muslim League's implacable hostility to any constitutional scheme that envisaged a common centre for the whole country. 'We were,' the British Ministers wrote, 'greatly impressed by the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu-majority rule.' Any plan capable of winning the acceptance of the League and the rest of political India had necessarily to be based on compromise and since the conflict of interests was fundamental the foundations of the compromise scheme were equally necessarily tenuous. According to the scheme, there was to be a union of India, embracing the provinces and the princely states and equipped with a legislature and an executive. The Union should administer only such subjects as foreign affairs, defence and communications, with all other matters accruing to the jurisdiction of the provinces. The states would also retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Centre.

The country was divided into three sections—A, B and C. Section A consisted of the non-Muslim majority provinces of Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa. The Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind were put under Section B, while the last one consisted of Bengal and Assam. The

provinces in these Sections would be free to form themselves into groups and to set up a common government and legislature to deal with pre-determined provincial subjects. Individual provinces that were loath to surrender their domestic autonomy could opt out of their respective groups, but decision to that effect could be taken by the legislature of the province concerned only after the first general election under the new Constitution. Similarly, the constitutions of the union and of the groups should contain a provision whereby 'any province could by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.' A highly complicated structure, its sole *raison d'etre* consisted in seeking to find a common-ground between two irreconcilable points of view. Neither Assam, a non-Muslim province, nor the North-West Frontier Province, a Congress province, desired grouping and yet their predilections were not taken into account. Similarly, a union of India was envisaged much against the will of the Muslim League. When the two parties signified their assent to the scheme, they evidently did so with considerable mental reservations and with the certainty that they would be able eventually to bend it to their own will

Nehru was frankly unhappy about a scheme that rendered the Centre so thoroughly ineffective in shaping India's destiny. With his characteristic candour, he declared in Bombay on July 11, 1946 that 'in going to the Constituent Assembly, inevitably we have to agree to a certain procedure of going into it. What we do there we are absolutely and entirely free to determine We have not committed ourselves in any single matter to anybody' His views were equally outspoken on the issue of grouping and reflected the prevailing feeling that the two smaller provinces in Section B would be completely overshadowed by powerful Punjab Assam had, of course, declined to walk into Bengal's parlour.

Maulana Azad, from whom Nehru took charge of Congress Presidentship in July 1946, has complained with some

bitterness that Nehru's forthright statements on the May 16 offer were primarily responsible for the eventual rejection of the scheme by the League and for the partition of India.[28] But his criticism rests on the rather erroneous assumption that the League had in fact accepted the offer. It is true that Nehru's utterances did not accord with the spirit or the letter of the proposals and this fact was made clear in the subsequent clarifications published by the Cabinet Mission But it is no less true that the League's endorsement of the scheme was influenced entirely by its determination to have its own way at the earliest opportunity. Both Jinnah and his party published strong protests against the Cabinet Mission's decisive verdict against Pakistan, characterising it as being based on 'commonplace and exploded arguments.' Nevertheless, they accepted the scheme claiming that it contained 'the germs of Pakistan.' Again, on June 6, the Council of the All-India Muslim League, endorsing the party executive's decision to work the long-term plan, explained the reasons for the proffered co-operation. The League Council declared that the 'basis and the foundation of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission's plan, by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces in Sections B and C.' It was further explained that the League proposed to enter the Constituent Assembly in the hope that 'it would ultimately result in the establishment of complete sovereign Pakistan.' The scheme was thus jettisoned as much by the Muslim League as by Nehru

The Cabinet Mission's efforts to persuade the two major parties to share the cares and responsibilities of government as a prelude to the final determination of the constitution proved equally fruitless. As was aptly observed at the time, the future completely dominated the present. After trying out an endless series of formulae and combinations and permutations in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting claims of the Congress and the League on the issue of the Executive Council's personnel, the visiting Ministers and

[28]Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, p 160.

the Viceroy published a statement on June 16, 1946 giving the names of fourteen Indian leaders who were proposed to be inducted into the Central Government Jinnah accepted the offer since all the five Muslim members belonged to his party, the Congress rejecting it on the ground that it could not subscribe to a position that challenged its claim as a national organisation. The inability of the Congress to accept the terms inevitably called for a reconsideration of the issue. In a statement, dated June 26, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission reiterated their frequently-expressed hope that when the discussions were resumed, the two parties would 'do their utmost to arrive at an accommodation upon the composition' of the transitional government. After a stay of more than three months in the country, the three British Ministers left India on June 29. During this period, they laboured ceaselessly, working like Trojans, and although their deliberations with Indian leaders produced no tangible results, it is indeed impossible to withhold one's admiration from them for the patience, tact, impartiality and wisdom with which they had set about their difficult undertaking.

Jinnah was furious that his party was not given an opportunity to join the interim government, although he had agreed to the arrangement announced on June 16. He convened a meeting of the Council of the All-India Muslim League on July 29 which declared that the Congress was 'bent upon setting up caste Hindu Raj in India with the connivance of the British' and expressed the conviction that 'now the time has come for the Muslim nation to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan to assert their just rights, to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future caste Hindu domination.' The Council further resolved that 'as a protest against and in token of their deep resentment of the attitude of the British, this Council calls upon the Mussulmans to renounce forthwith the titles conferred upon them by the alien Government'[29] Jinnah, who had climbed to

[29] *SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A Appadorai, 1921-47, Oxford University Press, 1957, pp 618-621.

giddy heights on the shoulders of the very 'alien government' no longer found any use for it! He had by now succeeded in establishing his complete ascendancy over the minds and hearts of his followers who found it most convenient to make a complete surrender of their independent judgment to him. 'What we have done to-day,' declared the League leader after the Council meeting, 'is the most historic act in our history.' He added: 'This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods.' He further said: 'To-day we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it.' August 16 was the date fixed for 'direct action.'

The League was determined to make a mighty display of its militancy on the day of 'direct action.' August 16 was declared a public holiday by the League Ministries of Sind and Bengal. Calcutta was fully prepared to welcome the day. Addressing a mammoth gathering of excited Muslims in the city, the Premier, H. S. Suhrawardy, declared that he would pull Bengal out of India if the Congress was put into power. 'We will see,' he said, 'that no revenue is received by such Central Government from Bengal and consider ourselves as a separate State having no connection with the Centre.'[30] General Sir Francis Tuker, who was an eye-witness to some of the most gruesome mass murders in India, writes: 'Mr. Suhrawardy was eager to expose the depredations of Hindus against his co-religionists, pointing an accusing finger at peaceful men and charging them with lying in wait for Muslims.'[31] The consequences of such calculated incitement to mob violence were terrible beyond description. Thousands of looters and assassins, who had been encouraged to emerge from their hiding in the criminal jungle of Calcutta, found themselves conveniently in possession of lethal weapons which they used without respite or pity. During the four days the holocaust raged, more than 5,000 lives were destroyed, while thrice that number of men, women and children were

[30]Menon V P., *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA,* Orient Longmans, p 294.

[31]Tuker, Sir Francis, Lieut.-General, *WHILE MEMORY SERVES,* Cassell, 1950, p.162.

mutilated, maimed and otherwise injured. The British-owned *Statesman* of Calcutta, rightly described as 'one of the most reputable newspapers in Asia,' wrote about the Calcutta killing with righteous indignation. 'The bloody shambles,' it declared, 'to which this country's largest city has been reduced is an abounding disgrace, which........ has inevitably tarnished seriously the all-India reputation of the League itself.' Many impartial and competent observers believed that the Premier, Suhrawardy, was directly responsible for what General Tuker aptly calls the Calcutta 'cataclysm' Indeed, the fate and the future of India was settled on the streets of the city by men who had run amuck by political and religious frenzy.

The outbreak of lawlessness at Noakhali in East Bengal early in October was less bloody, but no less frightening for its savagery. Gangs of Muslims, says Professor Brecher, went on 'the rampage, killing, looting, converting Hindus by force, and destroying Hindu temples and property indiscriminately.'[32] The news of the Bengal massacre spread like wild fire to the neighbouring provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, provoking the indignation of the Hindus. In Bihar, an inferno as ghastly and inexcusable as in Bengal, raged relentlessly from October 27 to November 6, when more than seven thousand Muslims were butchered Nehru, accompanied by Sardar Patel, Liaqat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar, the last two Muslim League members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, appeared on the scene of the riots and threatened to bomb the law-breakers if they refused to return to the path of sanity. The massacre of Muslims at Garhmukteswar in Uttar Pradesh on November 6 was equally noteworthy for the extent of the tragedy. Commenting on the Calcutta killing, Maulana Azad says that 'the military and the police were standing by but remained inactive while innocent men and women were being killed.'[33] This is not surprising since most of the

[32]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, p 320

[33]Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, p.159.

British officials, certain in the knowledge of their impending exit from India, had lost interest in preserving the fair name and reputation of their Government.[34] Indeed, Britain was rapidly drifting into the twilight of her rule in this country. Gandhi expressed the prevailing feeling when he said: 'We are not yet in the midst of a civil war but we are nearing it.'

It was in this atmosphere of strife and bitterness that Nehru joined the Wavell Government with his colleagues on September 2, 1946. The accession of the Congress to the Central Government was marred by the cold-blooded murder of Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a patriot and scholar who, in defiance of being called a 'Muslim Quisling,' had responded to the call of duty by agreeing to join the Government. For some time, the League chose to remain aloof since Wavell had insisted that it would 'not be open to either the Congress or the Muslim League to object to the names submitted by the other party, provided they are accepted by the Viceroy.' After another bout of brisk correspondence, in which Nehru also participated and which had by now reached enormous proportions, the League finally agreed to join the Central Government. The Executive Council was reconstituted following the entry of the League on October 15, 1946.[35] Nehru was unhappy about

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[34] As early as 1942 Sir Reginald Maxwell, Home Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council, had made the remarkable prediction that the British would be 'out of here two years after the war ends'. The Viceroy also said 'We are not going to remain in India.' *Gandhi* by Louis Fisher (1954 Signet Key Book Publication), page 137

[35] The Council consisted of: (1) Jawaharlal Nehru, (Vice President of the Executive Council—External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations); (2) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Home and Information and Broadcasting), (3) C. Rajagopalachari (Education and Arts); (4) Dr. Rajendra Prasad (Food and Agriculture); (5) Asaf Ali (Transport and Railways); (6) Sardar Baldev Singh (Defence), (7) Jagjivan Ram (Labour); (8) Dr. John Matthai (Industries and Supplies); (9) C H. Bhabha (Works, Mines and Power Supplies); (10) Liaqat Ali Khan (Finance); (11) I. I. Chundrigar (Commerce); (12) Abdur Rab Nishtar (Communications, Post and Air); (13) Ghazanfar Ali Khan (Health) and (14) Jogendra Nath Mandal (Legislative). The last five were the nominees of the League The inclusion of Mandal, a non-Muslim, as the representative of a purely communal organisation was merely to spite the Congress.

the arrival of the new contingent and wondered whether the gentlemen had come with the determination to provoke a conflict inside the administration as well. Jinnah's choice surprised and angered some of his own colleagues. Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin and Nawab Ismail Khan, says Maulana Azad, 'were absolutely sure about their own inclusion,' and were deeply disappointed when their names were omitted.[36]

Nehru's fears were not ill-founded. The League had not entered the Government to administer the affairs of the country in co-operation with the other parties but to demoralise and disrupt the administration from within. The interim Government, declared Liaqat Ali Khan, 'consisted of a Congress bloc and a Muslim League bloc, each functioning under separate leadership.' With the key finance portfolio at his disposal, he endeavoured to drive free enterprise in the country to despair by seeking to levy a twenty-five per cent. tax on all business profits exceeding one hundred thousand rupees. In collusion with some of the Muslim officials in the Central Secretariat, he tried to paralyse the departments in charge of Congress members by withholding financial grants from them. Years later, commenting on the continual deadlock that confronted the Congress in the interim government, Nehru said at a press conference on February 7, 1959 that there was an 'overwhelming sense of conflict and disruption' during those days due to the League's policy There was indeed no scope for compromise or mutual understanding[37] One more bid was made to bring about a *rapprochement* between the two parties, whose spokesmen were invited to England for discussions The December 1946 talks in London, attended by Wavell, Nehru, Jinnah, Baldev Singh and Liaqat Ali Khan, proved equally sterile, the breakdown, as before, being due to the inability of the parties to agree on the compulsory grouping of provinces under the proposed new dispensation. Meanwhile, the Constitu-

[36]Azad Maulana Abul Kalam, *INDIA WINS FREEDOM*, Orient Longmans, p.165.

[37]Nehru was commenting on Maulana Azad's somewhat tendentious book *India Wins Freedom* in which the author has criticised him rather severely on certain episodes

ent Assembly, boycotted by the League, met on December 9 with the venerable Dr. Sachhidananda Sinha taking the chair till the election of Rajendra Prasad as President. It had become abundantly clear by now that only by ridding the country of the incubus of the Muslim League politics could India expect to enjoy peace, progress and prosperity.

Was any other approach feasible? It is idle to believe that the Cabinet Mission's scheme of May 16, 1946 would have proved a panacea if the Congress and the League had agreed to work it in a spirit of mutual good-will and amity. Indeed, the very structure of the scheme, for which its authors were certainly not to blame, prevented the growth of any such understanding. Resting on the principle of provincial autonomy, the proposals at the same time negatived it by insisting on compulsory grouping. The fatal weakness of the scheme from the Indian point of view was the proposal for the creation of a weak and ineffective Centre, when every consideration of prudence demanded the setting up of a strong principal government clothed with ample powers to control the affairs of this vast country. What with its complex caste and class composition and its general economic backwardness, the population of India required an authority that would not only check and control any manifestations of fissiparous tendencies on its part but would also indicate to it new paths of progress and prosperity. National solidarity and national economic planning would have dissolved into a chimera without a powerful guiding hand. Indeed, some thoughtful men have begun to wonder whether India's Constitution of 1950 has not erred by granting more autonomy to the provinces, now called States, than is warranted by the requirements of national unity and efficient administration. In two forthright articles, published in October 1959, Mehr Chand Mahajan, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, has pleaded for the repeal of the Constitution in order to enable the Union Government to acquire and enforce wider jurisdiction over the States.

Moreover, under the British proposals, the Centre, in spite of its limited scope, would have become an arena for

perpetual communal conflicts. With the concept of separate 'Muslim nationhood' firmly embedded in the minds and hearts of its followers, the Muslim League would in all probability have demanded an arbitrary and fanciful share in the administration of the three central subjects— defence, external affairs and communications — always brandishing the weapon of secession provided for in the scheme in the event of the rejection of its unjust claims. Even moderate Muslim politicians like Sir Sultan Ahmed had already indicated the lines on the basis of which alone a settlement on the administration of the Central affairs could be expected. Dissension and disharmony on the issue would undoubtedly have provoked country-wide conflicts between the major communities rendering such disturbances a chronic feature of Indian life. It is somewhat naive to assume that the acerbities and enmities of the day would have disappeared if the unity of India had been preserved. Such a possibility disappeared as long ago as 1940 when the League adopted the partition resolution and sought to implement it by propagating the two-nation doctrine. The bitterness engendered by its campaign had poisoned and penetrated the life of the people too deep to be ignored or eradicated Communalism could find its fulfilment only in India's partition.

Further, in a 'united India' of the suggested pattern, the princely states would have proved a serious menace to national solidarity and an irremovable obstacle to the country's economic progress. Nurtured in the traditions of obscurantism and always anxious to safeguard their own vested interests, the princes, at any rate a large number of them, would never have been able to place country above personal aggrandizement. And they would have found in the reactionary elements in the country their trusted champions who would have fought their battles as vehemently as they did their own. It cannot be seriously suggested that a state like Hyderabad would have been assisted to its well deserved demise under the dispensation envisaged by the British plan. Indeed, the dictum 'paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor

transferred to the new Government' was fraught with grave consequences to India's territorial integrity. With all the weight of his constitutional and legal knowledge, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayar, the Dewan of Travancore, claimed that his state would become an independent and sovereign unit once British paramountcy lapsed. In Hyderabad, Kasim Razvi, the Razakar leader, had the temerity to declare even after India's independence that he would succeed in washing the feet of his 'sovereign,' the Nizam, with the waters of the Arabian Sea. Earlier, recalling the forgotten and fictitious glory of the Nizams, the Nawab of Chhatari had demanded the retrocession of the territories ceded by them to the East India Company and in addition asked for an outlet to the sea by granting a port to the state, preferably Goa.[38] The Nawab of Bhopal's ambitions were no less overweening. He told the Cabinet Mission on April 2, 1946 that the states insisted on maintaining and perpetuating their separate existence. He asked what enormity there was in setting up three sovereign states in India if the establishment of two was considered inevitable. The third 'sovereign state' would, of course, have consisted of five hundred odd principalities scattered all over the country.[39] The Raja of Bilaspur declared that he would fight for the 'protection' of his state, although the territory of this bellicose prince was scarcely 500 square miles inhabited by an indigent population of a little over one lakh[40] In March 1948, seven months after India became independent, the representative of a state called Sandur, consisting of a dozen depopulated villages and ruled by a Raja who could offer his people nothing but glamour, threatened from Delhi that any attempts to absorb this absurdly petty principality would be resisted with 'vigour and determination.' Such was the temper and the outlook

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[38]Menon V. P., *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, 1956, p 63.

[39]When the Indo-Chinese border dispute assumed serious proportions in 1959, the Nawab offered to fight on behalf of India He, however, died on February 4, 1960

[40]Menon V. P., *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, 1956, pp 62, 63.

of the princes and no statesmanship or human ingenuity could have succeeded in grappling with the states' problem under an arrangement that recognised the *status quo* as sacrosanct.

India could not, therefore, hope to survive with so many dangers perpetually threatening to destroy her independence and integrity. A new approach was necessary and it was made possible by the British Prime Minister who announced on February 20, 1947 that it was the definite intention of the British Government 'to take necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948.' He also announced the termination of Wavell's term of office saying that his had been a war-time appointment. 'Lord Wavell,' Attlee told the House of Commons, 'has discharged this high office during this very difficult period with devotion and a high sense of duty. It has, however, seemed that the opening of a new and final phase in India is an appropriate time to terminate this war appointment.' Admiral Mountbatten had agreed to undertake the task of 'transferring to Indian hands responsibility for the Government of British India in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India.' In England, there was little doubt about the need for a change in the Viceroyalty, but the manner of its announcement and Wavell's sudden recall were not regarded as politic. 'I hold no brief for Lord Wavell,' declared Churchill. 'He has been the willing or unwilling agent of the Government in all the errors and mistakes into which they have been led, but I have no idea why he has been cast aside at this juncture.'

Many years after the event, Attlee explained why he considered the replacement of Wavell by Lord Mountbatten necessary. 'No progress had been made,' he wrote in his book, 'since the return of the Cabinet Mission and Lord Wavell and his chief service advisers were despondent and could only suggest a progressive retirement from India province by province, which was, in my view, a counsel of despair. I had a great admiration for Lord Wavell both as a soldier and a man, but I did not think that he

was likely to find a solution.' Attlee doubted whether the Viceroy and the Indians 'could really, understand each other. New men were needed for a new policy.'[41] This authoritative explanation clinches the issue. Wavell was a singularly unfortunate man and an evil fate pursued him relentlessly towards the end of his career. He was given almost impossible assignments both in Africa and India. Churchill expected him to become the architect of Allied victory, without furnishing him with the means for producing such results. The political problem that confronted him in India was no less heart-breaking. It is difficult to believe how he could have ignored the Congress or the Muslim Leeague in any political settlement and, thanks to their conflicting ideas, the two were determined not to come together. In spite of his profound conviction about the abiding value of preserving India's unity, he was forced to cling to the compromise scheme of May 16, 1946 in spite of its inadequacies and inner contradictions. How he would have acquitted himself if he had been given the task that was later assigned to his successor is a matter for speculation which has no place in history. Nevertheless, he was a tired man and although he could not openly avow it, his recall might have brought him real relief. His term in India was not a success, but his failure was perhaps inevitable since his Viceroyalty synchronised with the turbulent interval that preceded the attainment of the country's freedom.

[41] Attlee C. R., *AS IT HAPPENED,* Heinemann, 1954, p. 183.

15. LORD MOUNTBATTEN

The appointment of Lord Mountbatten to the Indian Viceroyalty in succession to Lord Wavell was deeply resented by the Tories who charged the 'Socialist' Government with the design of exploiting the high reputation of the sailor-statesman to bolster up its 'disgraceful' India policy. The prospect of losing India, despite post-war Britain's manifest inability to hold her, excited in their breasts feelings of bitterness and sorrow as poignant as personal bereavement. The debate in the two Houses of Parliament on Attlee's announcement of February 20, 1947, fixing the date for British withdrawal from India, revealed the intensity of Conservative antagonism to the proposal. Lord Templewood, who, as Secretary of State, had played no small part in frustrating India's efforts to overcome the trammels of her subordinate status, declared in the House of Lords on February 25 that the decision to transfer power to this country was a case, not of 'gradual appeasement', but of 'unconditional surrender at the expense of many to whom we have given specific pledges for generations past'. His Lordship went on to say: 'It is the duty and destiny of Britain to complete our task in India by achieving peacefully and through agreement the transfer of British power and we should refuse to accept final separation before our obligations and responsibilities are adequately discharged.'

Even in the year of India's independence, the Tory spokesmen could not divest their minds of the illusion about the indispensability of British rule to this country. Lord Samuel, leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords, heartily endorsed the Government's decision and criticized Templewood by recalling that there was not a

Simon, another worshipper at the shrine of imperialism, called into question the representative character of the Indian Constituent Assembly and asked: 'Can it mean that if there is no constitution settled by fully representative Constituent Assembly by June 1948, they would dream of handing over the Government of India to Pandit Nehru? It cannot mean that.' Simon feared that the end of 'this business' was not going to be the establishment of peace in India but to 'degrade the British name'. Lord Halifax refused to share this point of view and held that 'maintenance of British control pending agreement would inevitably have resulted in throwing effective power into the hands of the minority. I think it would certainly have exposed us in India and outside to the charge of insincerity'. He was not, he said, prepared 'to condemn what the British Government are doing unless I can honestly and confidently recommend a better solution'. The Secretary of State, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, clinched the issue when he said: 'The advice we have received from responsible authorities in India has been that, taking all circumstances into account, British rule cannot be maintained on its existing basis with adequate efficiency after 1948.'

The star performance was, of course, that of Churchill. The India debate in the House of Commons gave him a great opportunity on March 6 to make a lavish display of his oratorical abilities. His attack on Nehru was noteworthy for its unfairness and revealed how implacable was the resentment which British diehards bore against the leaders of Indian nationalism. 'It was,' declared Churchill, 'a cardinal mistake to entrust the interim Government to a leader of caste Hindus, Mr. Nehru. He had good reason to be the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth.' Churchill, of course, meant 'Empire' instead of 'Commonwealth' for, although after independence India was under no obligation to maintain her ties with Britain, it was entirely due to Nehru's influence that she agreed to become a member of the Com-

monwealth.[1] Characterising the proposal for British withdrawal as 'operation scuttle', Churchill declared: 'In handing over the Government of India to these so-called political classes, you are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain' If persons like Nehru are men of straw, one wonders who in this wide world can qualify himself to be called the salt of the earth.

Churchill's unbalanced speech provoked an immediate rejoinder from A. V. Alexander, Minister for Defence, who said: 'History may record that Mr. Churchill's speech this afternoon has been the principal factor in preventing the sides coming together.'[2] The Prime Minister was equally outspoken He had no doubt in his mind that the decision of his Government to restore the sovereignty of India to her people by the appointed time was a wise one. 'I think,' Attlee said, 'that there has been too much delay, too much hesitation, too much fear to go forward; but having reached the present stage, we cannot go back and cannot remain as we are.'

The delay in the transfer of power was indeed fatal to the unity of India and to the restoration of her inheritance without mutilation, massacre and mass displacement of populations. It was too late to arrest the forces of separatism and disintegration in the country. Jinnah, who had transformed a vague impulse into an imperative demand, had begun to proclaim that he was not an Indian In an interview to Norman Cliff, foreign editor of the *News Chronicle*, London, in March 1946, he had stated that 'India is a state of nationalities, including two major nations' and had added 'I don't regard myself as an Indian'.

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[1]Alan Campbell-Johnson wrote on March 25, 1947 'In Mountbatten's view, Nehru was extremely frank and fair, and astounded him by actually suggesting at one point an Anglo-Indian union involving nothing less than common citizenship—in effect, a far closer bond than Commonwealth status, which Nehru felt was psychologically and emotionally unacceptable' (*Mission with Mountbatten*, page 45)

[2]The Opposition's amendment declining to accept the Government's policy of transferring power from Britain to India by June 1948 was defeated in the House of Commons by 337 votes to 185.

Strife and civil war were implicit in the demand of the Muslim League and in the manner in which it was sought to be enforced.[3] Attlee's announcement of February 20 had lent great urgency to the need for the party to capture power in the provinces claimed by it as the constituent units of the future Muslim state. It was imperative to destroy the coalition ministry in the Punjab and to oust the Khan Saheb Cabinet in the North-West Frontier Province if the dream of Pakistan was to become a reality.. Sir Khizr Hyat Khan, who headed the Punjab Ministry, was a resolute person who had consistently refused to walk into the League's parlour. But the lawlessness and the militancy of the League eventually proved irresistible. The party's National Guards became increasingly unruly and truculent, their unchecked activities steadily pushing the unhappy province towards the brink of an unprecedented chaos. In the first week of March, Khizr Hyat Khan's ministry resigned, and since the Hindus and Sikhs refused to co-operate with any government formed by the League, the Governor, Sir Evan Jenkins, took the administration of the province under his direct control. On March 21, Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader, declared that the Sikhs would not join any Ministry 'which is dominated by the Muslim League'. He endorsed in principle the partition scheme attributed to Nehru, provided the interests of the Sikhs were not unduly jeopardised by the division of the province. From that period, political wrangles and communal riots became a normal feature in the Punjab, culminating in a two-way exodus of large sections of the population soon after the country's independence.

[3]Invited by Jinnah to join his party, Sir Mirza Ismail, a distinguished Muslim administrator, replied on July 23, 1941 that he could not do so because of 'my lifelong association with a Hindu Maharaja and my long service in a Hindu State where I have received the most loyal co-operation from my Hindu fellow-citizens throughout my official career' This fact, Sir Mirza explained, prevented him from 'identifying myself with a political organisation which is avowedly anti-Hindu in its aims and objects' R G Casey, the Australian statesman. who had for sometime been the Governor of Bengal, expressed the same view about the ideas and ideals of the League. He said: 'The Muslim League have worked themselves up into a state of mind that can only be called Hindu-phobia.'

In the North-West Frontier Province, the League's crusade against the Congress Ministry was equally notable for its ruthlessness. The Khan brothers were devoted and unyielding adherents of the national organisation and refused to make common cause with a party whose members had played no small part in thwarting the popular movement by co-operating with the bureaucracy. They insisted that, if the partition of India was the only solution to her political problem, the Pathans should be free to have their own independent state in collaboration with their brethren across the frontier. The non-Muslims comprised a negligible fraction of the population in the province, but their helplessness brought them no immunity from the League's aggression. 'I feel seriously concerned', cried Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 'at the manslaughter and devastation of innocent people's property that are now in progress. I see darkness all round and I do not know whither my dear motherland is being led to.' After the great Calcutta killing in the previous year, non-Muslim opinion in Bengal had crystallised itself in favour of partition as the only escape from the tyranny and terrorism of the champions of the two-nation creed.

This was the gloomy situation that confronted Mountbatten when he assumed charge of the Indian administration on March 24. Both the mission and the mandate given to him were clear and categorical. He was called upon to make earnest endeavours till October 1, to promote an agreement among the major Indian parties on the basis of preserving the country's territorial integrity and to suggest alternative measures after that date in the event of his failure to do so. As he pointed out on the day he assumed the Indian office, his was not a normal Viceroyalty. He was invited to play the historic role of bringing to an end the centuries' old political relations between England and India. For a man of Mountbatten's democratic disposition, the mission was undoubtedly congenial, but the tasks that accompanied it were heart-breaking He, however, enjoyed the unbounded confidence of the British Government which gave him considerable freedom of action in carrying out

its decision to transfer power to Indian hands. He had brought with him a small team of tried men upon whose experience, ability and wisdom he could depend in fulfilling his mighty undertaking. Lord Ismay had been persuaded to come out of his retirement to act as the new Viceroy's Chief of Staff, while Sir Eric Mieville had agreed to function as his principal Secretary. Above all, Mountbatten was supremely confident of his own abilities to rise equal to his 'explosive commitment'. Tall, erect, manly and strikingly handsome, he had already emerged as a world figure by a superb display of his talents as much as an administrator and statesman as a naval commander. He combines in his person the rare qualities of prince charming and of a resolute and resourceful man of action. Indecision and delay are infirmities to which he is a total stranger and he is gifted with a sense of timing that almost borders on prescience. It was indeed impossible for the British Government to find his equal in solving the Indian problem.

The Viceroy was quick to discover both from his survey of the political scene and from his conversations with the Indian leaders, that the dateline of June 1948 for the transfer of power was too far to meet the requirements of the situation. He was equally convinced that the partition of the country was as inescapable as British withdrawal from the Indian sub continent. Mahatma Gandhi's suggestion that Jinnah should be invited to assume the responsibilities of the Indian Government merely underlined the seriousness of the political deadlock. In a bid to arrest the growth of lawlessness in the country, Mountbatten persuaded Gandhi and Jinnah to issue a joint appeal. Deploring the acts of lawlessness and violence in the country, the statement, published on April 15, denounced 'for all time the use of force to achieve political ends'. Its signatories accordingly called upon all the communities in the country 'not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any word which might be construed as an incitement to such acts'. The plea was, however, as futile as appeal to a howling

ocean to calm down. Commenting later on the failure of the joint appeal, Gandhi made the pregnant observation that his own signature was of little value since he had never believed in violence. It derived its significance from Jinnah's signature.[4]

Mountbatten soon realised the futility of pleading with the League to resile from its position and accordingly drew up his own scheme for the partition of India which included the separation of the non-Muslim majority areas in the Punjab and Bengal from the proposed state of Pakistan. The scheme was discussed at a conference with the provincial Governors held in the middle of April, when the Governor of the Punjab warned that the division of his province would be both dangerous and disastrous. The fears of Sir Evan Jenkins were shared by many other discerning persons. Sir Malcolm Darling, for instance, wrote: 'What a hash politics threaten to make of this tract, where Hindu, Muslim and Sikh are as mixed up as the ingredients of a well-made *pilau* (rice boiled with fowl, meat or fish, and spices, raisins)!' Commenting on the complete harmony that had prevailed between the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, Darling said that such time-honoured amity was destroyed by the separatist doctrines of the politicians. 'Without neighbourliness,' he wrote, 'there can be no comfort in village life, but, alas, propaganda with its ghastly brood—mutilation, massacre and rape—has turned Mr. Jinnah's two-nation creed in the village from theory into a bloody fact.'[5] But whatever the consequences, the partition of the country on the basis of the communal composition of the population offered the only solution to the political and the law and order problem.

Jinnah was, however, furious. Both public opinion and the Mountbatten proposals for the division of districts and even smaller administrative units for purposes of demarcating the boundaries of the proposed Dominions of India and Pakistan seriously upset his expectations. In an

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[4]Tendulkar, D G, *MAHATMA*, Vol. 7, The Times of India, p 445.

[5]Darling, Malcolm Lyall, *AT FREEDOM'S DOOR*, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp 302, 303.

interview to Doon Campbell, Reuter's correspondent, on May 21, the League leader asserted that the idea of partitioning the Punjab and Bengal was 'thoughtless and reckless'. He proclaimed his 'deadly' hostility to any such move and warned that he would 'fight every inch against it'. At the same time he demanded a corridor for linking West Pakistan with East Bengal, involving a strip of territory running about one thousand miles across the Indian Dominion! 'Jinnah,' wrote Alan Campbell-Johnson, 'has dropped a carefully timed and placed bombshell. He demands an eight-hundred-mile 'corridor' to link West and East Pakistan. The technique of releasing it seems to have been copied from Stalin.'[6] The demand was, of course, rejected by the Indian leaders, including Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly. On May 24, Nehru dismissed it as 'fantastic and absurd' and declared that Jinnah's overweening ambitions merely indicated that he 'desires no settlement of any kind'.[7] Earlier, on May 2, at a convention of the non-Muslim legislators of the Punjab, unanimous decisions were taken for the partition of the province on a 'just and equitable basis'. Apart from his verbal broadsides, Jinnah could not seriously challenge this decision, because his 'experience with the Sikhs must have made him realise that the unity of the Punjab was physically impossible'.[8] In April, some of the leading legislators of Bengal, including Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, had urged the formation of a 'separate autonomous province in West and North Bengal within the Indian Union'. The growth of public opinion in favour of partition greatly strengthened Mountbatten's hands who flew to London on May 18 to secure the approval of the

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[6]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN*, Robert Hale, 1951, p. 94.

[7]According to Jinnah's own admission, which will be quoted later, Pakistan was the greatest windfall for him and his adherents and yet he criticized the non-Muslims for their refusal to concede all his extravagant demands. He told Mountbatten: 'Frankly, your Excellency, the Hindus are impossible. They always want seventeen annas for the rupee.' (quoted by Campbell-Johnson in his book, page 70).

[8]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN*, Robert Hale, 1951, p.47.

British Government to his new proposals. He returned to India on the last day of the month after winning Whitehall's assent to the political settlement on the basis suggested by him.

The British Government's final proposals for the transfer of power to India were embodied in a statement published on June 3, 1947. They laid down that the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab should meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim-majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members who thus sat separately, were to be empowered to vote whether or not the province should be separated 'If,' says the document, 'a simple majority of either part decides in favour of partition, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly.' The Legislative Assembly of Sind was called upon to hold a special session to decide the future of the province. Arrangements were also envisaged for ascertaining the popular will in Baluchistan. In the province of Assam, where the Hindus predominate, the Muslim-majority district of Sylhet was to be given an opportunity to decide whether or not to join East Bengal, the Eastern wing of Pakistan. Lastly, although the N.W.F. Province was controlled by the Congress, its geographical position demanded that a referendum should be held to ascertain the popular will in the province on the issue of Pakistan. The statement appreciated the anxiety of the major political parties that 'there should be the earliest possible transfer of power in India' and accordingly signified the British Government's willingness to anticipate the date June 1948 for the handing over of power. It was also announced that a Boundary Commission would be set up by the Governor-General to demarcate the boundaries between the two countries in Bengal and the Punjab.[9]

Both in his broadcast message and at the press conference, Mountbatten explained the circumstances that led to the adoption of the partition scheme In a reference to the

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[9] *SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A Appadorai, Vol II, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1957, pp.670-675.

Sikhs, whom he described as 'this valiant community', the Viceroy expressed his sorrow that the partition of the Punjab would result in splitting them 'to a greater or lesser extent'. Finally, he pleaded that 'every single one of us' must bend all his efforts to the task of ensuring a peaceful and orderly transfer of power. Broadcasting his message on the same day, June 3, Nehru recalled how 'these months have been full of tragedy for millions' and pleaded that such misery and suffering should not be allowed to recur. Explaining why the partition of India had become inevitable, he expressed his conviction that 'our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint'. He further said: 'There has been violence, shameful, degrading and revolting violence, in various parts of the country. This must end. We are determined to end it.' With an eloquence and humility worthy of his greatness, Nehru added: 'We are little men serving a great cause, but, because the cause is great something of that greatness falls upon us also. Mighty forces are at work in the world to-day and in India and I have no doubt that we are ushering in a period of greatness for India. The India of geography, of history and tradition, the India of our minds and hearts, cannot change.'[10] Jinnah, who also broadcast his message that day, asked for the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the country so that the transfer of power could be effected in a 'peaceful and orderly manner'.

No time was lost in giving practical effect to the statement of June 3. On June 20, the verdict of Bengal was ascertained on the issue whether or not it should be partitioned and the decision went in favour of division. The referendum in the district of Sylhet revealed that 2,39,619 voted for joining East Bengal as against 1,84,041 for remaining with India. The district accordingly became part

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[10]Despite his pre-occupations with the affairs of his own country, Nehru never lost sight of the broad horizons Thanks to his initiative, an Inter-Asian Relations Conference was held in Delhi in April 1947. Addressing the delegates, Gandhi said: "You will complete the conquest of the West, not through vengeance, because you have been exploited but with real understanding." (Tendulkar, D. G., *MAHATMA*, Vol. 7. p. 445).

of East Pakistan. Sind and Baluchistan voted in favour of participating in the proposed Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. In July, the referendum in the North-West Frontier Province disclosed that some 50 49 per cent. of the total number of voters in the province exercised their votes in favour of Pakistan. It is, of course, impossible to say what the result would have been if the Congress had not boycotted the referendum. Apart from the fact that the Congresss was averse to approaching the people on communal issues, there was a real danger of widespread outbreaks of violence had it launched an electioneering campaign against the creation of Pakistan Explaining the reasons for his party's decision to boycott the referendum, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan had said on June 24 that an 'organised campaign of terrorism' had been launched by the League, resulting in the 'murder of hundreds of innocent men, women and children', besides extensive destruction of property. In such an atmosphere, an open contest between the Congress and the League would have caused even greater suffering to the people. Nevertheless, the verdict entitled the League to claim the Province as an integral part of the future State of Pakistan. The plea of the Khan brothers for the formation of Pathanistan was dismissed by Jinnah as 'insidious and spurious'.

The stage was now set for bringing the Dominions of India and Pakistan into existence. On June 30 two Boundary Commissions were set up by the Governor-General for the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, each Commission consisting of two Muslim and two non-Muslim members. Later, the name of Sir Cyril Radcliffe was announced to function as Chairman for both the bodies. The Commissions were instructed to divide each province into two parts by ascertaining the contiguous areas of Muslims and non-Muslims and in doing so they were to take "other considerations" into account. The Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the two Houses of British Parliament on July 4 Being essentially an enabling measure, the Bill was short, but as Lord Listowel, the new Secretary of State, rightly observed in his speech on July

16, it held the 'fulfilment of a great purpose'. Sponsoring the Bill in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that it was a unique piece of legislation and added that 'never before has such a large portion of the world population achieved independence through legislation alone'. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, gave sanction not only for the transfer of power to the two Dominions to be created out of the sub-continent, but provided for the establishment of the necessary machinery for the partition of the country. In the wake of the new statute, a Partition Council and an Arbitral Tribunal were set up. The division of the armed forces was also decided upon and the difficult and delicate task was entrusted to the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who was to be known as Supreme Commander from August 15, the day on which the two new Dominions were to be created.

It would have been in the fitness of things if Mountbatten had been the first Governor-General of the two independent States. That indeed was the understanding, but eventually Jinnah changed his mind, voting himself to that office.[11] The sudden reversal of the original arrangement did not, however, deflect the Indian leaders, headed by Nehru and Sardar Patel, from their resolve to have Mountbatten as free India's first Governor-General. Their earnestness and importunity eventually overcame his embarrassment arising out of the new situation created by Jinnah's decision. Apart from the fact that India was proving true to her heritage by thus signifying her gratitude to her great friend and benefactor, the choice of Mountbatten as the head of the new State was in every way prudent. Many of the acts done by the Government of India in the initial months in relation to Pakistan and in its dealings with Hyderabad and Kashmir would have lent

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[11]Campbell-Johnson writes: 'Jinnah indicated that he had taken the decision somewhat against his will on the insistence of his close friends, but it would be interesting to know who those friends are, as it would seem that senior colleagues and well-wishers have been advising him strongly to the contrary, feeling he would have more power in his hands as Prime Minister.' (*Mission with Mountbatten,* page 127).

themselves to even greater misinterpretation had there been no non-Indian at the helm of the country's affairs during that crucial period. Thanks to the recorded views of men like Mountbatten and his able and impartial lieutenants about the happenings of those times, India has no reason to fear the verdict of history on any of the vital issues concerning her relations with her neighbour. Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay, and Sir Archibald Nye, Governor of Madras, also agreed to stay on in response to Indian request.

August 15, 1947 marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new one After long centuries of strife, servitude and stagnation, India emerged on that day as a free nation to take her rightful place among the sovereign countries of the world It was indeed a great and glorious day, rendered possible by the suffering and sacrifice of millions of people, stretched over many generations. Throughout the length and breadth of the country devout prayers of thankfulness and gratitude were sent out from every house of worship and from the tabernacle of every patriotic heart for the fulfilment of the nation's great destiny. 'Long years ago,' declared Nehru in the Constituent Assembly, 'we had made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially.' It was midnight when he was making this memorable speech. He continued 'When the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.' In a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, he said: 'On this day, our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our nation, who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us.'[12] Mountbatten, who addressed the Constituent Assembly as free India's first constitutional head, explained to the House that the rapid increase in the communal tension and rioting hastened his

[12]Tendulkar, D.G., *MAHATMA*, Vol. 7, The Times of India, pp.91-93.

resolve to speed up the withdrawal of British rule from the country. Thanking the Assembly for endorsing its leaders' invitation to him to remain as India's Governor-General, Mountbatten said: 'No words can express our gratitude for the understanding and co-operation as well as the true sympathy and generosity of spirit which have been shown to us at all times.'[13]

Like the people of India, their counterparts in Pakistan rejoiced at the birth of a new Muslim state. On August 14, Jinnah, who had left for Karachi a week before that date, gave a categorical assurance to the minorities in the new Dominion that they had nothing to fear about their future. 'The two Indias,' he said, 'are parting as friends and will continue to be friends for ever.' Mountbatten, who sponsored the birth of Pakistan, said in his speech at Karachi on August 14 that its creation was an event in history. 'We, who are part of history,' he said, 'and are helping to make it, are not well-placed, even if we wished, to moralise on the event, to look back and survey the sequence of the past that led to it.' Nevertheless, he fervently hoped that progress and prosperity would mark the career of Pakistan and that she would 'continue in friendship with her neighbours and with all the nations of the world.'[14] Liaqat Ali Khan, an able and far-sighted man who had laboured hard for the creation of the Muslim state, became its first Prime Minister, while real power lay in the hands of Jinnah[15]

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[13]*SPEECHES BY THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA*, Government of India, 194 48, p.32.

[14]Ibid, pp.27,29.

[15]Commenting on the place of Jinnah in Pakistan Campbell-Johnson writes. 'He makes only the most superficial attempt to disguise himself as a constitutional Governor-General, and one of his first acts after putting his name forward was to apply for powers under the 9th Schedule rather than Part II of the 1935 Act which gave him at once dictatorial powers unknown to any constitutional Governor-General representing the King. Here indeed is Pakistan's King-Emperor, Archbishop of Canterbury, Speaker and Prime Minister concentrated into one formidable Quaid-e-Azam.' (*Mission with Mountbatten*, page 156).

It was indeed the shining hour for the Founder of Pakistan. Recording her impressions of Jinnah's frame of mind and that of his sister soon after the attainment of Pakistan, an American writer says: 'If Fatima's reaction was a glow of family pride, her brother's was a fever of ecstasy. His whole manner indicated that an almost overwhelming exaltation was racing through his veins.'[16]. Jinnah's elation was perfectly understandable and legitimate, but the sense of fulfilment on his part ought to have promoted real concord and good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan. India bore no ill-will towards her next-door neighbour and no less a person than Mountbatten quoted Nehru as saying: 'I believe that for a variety of reasons, it is inevitable that India and Pakistan should draw closer to one another, or else they will come into conflict. There is no middle way.' Unfortunately, such sentiments found little response from Karachi which, in spite of its distance, could not shed its obsession and suspicions about India and her leaders. 'It is clear,' wrote Campbell-Johnson, "that Jinnah, living in almost total isolation both from his followers and the outside world, is a far from happy man who is trying to exorcise his fears by nourishing his hatreds.'[17] There is considerable force in the philosophic reflection that expectation is often sweeter than realisation and that no goal is worth much after its attainment. The inability of the two countries to face their mutual problems in a spirit of understanding was one of the potent causes for the enormous displacement of populations that took place soon after independence.

The Award of Sir Cyril Radcliffe on the division of the Punjab and Bengal, published on August 17, 1947, had the most disastrous effect on the communal relations between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, especially in the Land of the Five Rivers. The nature of the assignment to the Boundary Commissions, though perhaps unavoidable, was basically wrong It was impossible to draw an equitable

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[16]White, Margaret Bourke, *HALF WAY TO FREEDOM*, Simon & Schuster, pp 91, 92

[17]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN*, Robert Hale, 1951, p 217.

line of demarcation anywhere when the Muslim and the non-Muslim populations were so completely mixed up in the two provinces. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the few Indian leaders who had the vision to foresee the impossibility of the task set to the Commission and warned, perhaps a little too late, that unless the division was in consonance with the accepted canons of territorial demarcation, even if it involved some injustice to the majority and the minority communities, both the Dominions would inherit a legacy of strife, ill-will and bitterness. The Award pleased neither country, and Pakistan's disappointment was publicly expressed by one of her Ministers who described it as a 'parting kick to the Muslims by the British'!

The division of the provinces provoked the dangerous and reckless feeling that they belonged exclusively to the majority communities, the others being interlopers, with no right to remain in their homes, no matter for how many centuries their families had lived in them. In the Punjab, serious riots took place in the districts of Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot and Gujranwala, resulting in an unprecedented massacre of the minorities. The Sikhs, whose industry and enterprise, had transformed the canal areas into some of the most fertile regions in the country, were cruelly driven out of their farms and homesteads along with the Hindus and poured into India, most of them in utter penury and with deep resentment raging in their hearts. In the Indian portion of the Punjab and more especially in Amritsar, the Muslims shared a similar fate and were forced to flee to Pakistan for security. The movement of the refugees between the two countries often assumed the terrifying proportion of a river in spate, the number of the unfortunate men, women and children involved on each side being some 5½ millions by the middle of 1948. Nearly 40 per cent. of the Sikh community was reduced to poverty and was forced to start life all over again in environments far removed from the ancestral homes of its members.[18] 'When August 15 came,' wrote

[18]Menon, V.P., *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA*, Orient Longmans, p.433.

Sir Malcolm Darling, 'this famous province........was ripped in two like a piece of old cloth and handed over in a day to anarchy, savagery and ruin.'[19] Nehru, who made valiant attempts to stem the mortal storm, cried in anguish that such barbarism became possible because of the 'division of hearts.' It is difficult to assess the extent of the loss of property suffered by the non-Muslim emigrants from Pakistan, but, according to a broad estimate officially made some years ago, it was valued at the staggering figure of Rs. 4,000 crores as against Rs. 400 crores worth of property left behind by Muslims in India.

Mahatma Gandhi was in Bengal when the human holocaust was convulsing the Punjab. Since the Muslim League launched its 'direct action' movement in August 1946, plunging large areas in the country into disorder, Gandhi knew no peace or rest. He moved ceaselessly from one riot-torn province to another, seeking to wipe the tears of the victims of communal aggression and offering solace to lacerated hearts. On the day India rejoiced at the dawn of independence, the Mahatma spent the hours in Calcutta in prayer and fasting, earnestly hoping that the senseless killing and destruction that had disgraced India's name would end. Since the great killing of 1946, the city was never peaceful and was often disturbed by widespread violence. Gandhi, whose healing mission at Noakhali and in Bihar had produced astounding results, had gone to Calcutta to dissuade the Hindus from resorting to acts of retaliation against the Muslim minority in the City. The campaign of this unarmed soldier in the cause of sanity and civilized behaviour was an outstanding success and won the admiration of Mountbatten who wrote to the Mahatma on August 26, 1947 saying: 'In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the one Man Boundary

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[19]Darling, Malcolm L[illegible] [illegible]EDOM'S DOOR, Oxford University Press, 1949, [illegible]

Force?'[20] But the fraternisation between the two communities that had marked the independence celebrations on August 15 was short-lived and the city once again surrendered to violence and lawlessness. The Mahatma, who had planned to proceed to the strife-torn Punjab, abandoned the project and instead commenced a fast on September 1 as the only remedy for the madness of his countrymen in Calcutta. He, however, broke it on September 4 on receiving solemn assurances from the leaders that the peace of the city would be preserved at all costs.

The Mahatma arrived in Delhi on September 9 to extinguish the fire that had begun to rage there. Thousands of refugees had poured into the Indian capital in search of food, shelter and revenge. In their despair and desperation, many of them sought comfort and consolation by committing the same crimes that had uprooted them from their ancestral homes rendering their lives desolate and burdensome.[21] Sardar Patel, who was in charge of the Home portfolio, had a two-fold task in preventing the capital from sinking into chaos. It made no difference to his worries and anxieties whether the challenge to law and order came from the aggrieved or the aggressors. With anger burning in their hearts, the displaced persons were in no mood to accept counsels of moderation and humanity. Even Muslims of the eminence and nobility of Dr. Zakir

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[20]Pyarelal, *MAHATMA GANDHI: THE LAST PHASE*, Vol. II, Navjivan Publishing House, 1958, p 382.

[21]Mahatma Gandhi's Secretary, Pyarelal, records an episode in Delhi which is worth recalling for its poignancy. One day in September, Nehru confronted a crowd of refugees in Delhi when they were returning laden with loot. Descending upon a particularly agrressive-looking youngman, the Prime Minister shook him by the scruff of his neck. The young refugee did not protest, but only muttered: 'Yes, Panditji, go on. What better luck can I expect than to die at your hands' Pyarelal writes: "Pandit Nehru's wrath melted away. His face was sad, his voice full of emotion. 'This is not the time for me to tell you how much I feel for you all,' he said, 'and how my heart aches at your suffering But what I say to you is 'Have these Muslims done you any harm? If not, you must not injure them. We must be just. If justice requires it and it is necessary, we can go to war with Pakistan and you can enlist. But this kind of thing is degrading and cowardly'." The crowd cheered him wildly and dispersed.

Husain were not safe from the fury of the refugees and every precaution and show of force became necessary to protect the large concentration of Muslims living in camps in and around Delhi. At the same time, the Sardar was called upon to preserve the fabric of the civic life from attacks by the fanatical and desperate sections of the Muslim community resident in the city. The extent of the menace from them was unexplored, but its seriousness was never in doubt. A large percentage of the police force in Delhi consisted of Muslims, a number of whom had deserted, taking with them both their uniforms and firearms. Too much reliance could not be placed on the loyalty of the rest. Pyarelal writes: 'Searches of Muslim houses by the police had revealed dumps of bombs, arms and ammunition. Sten guns, Bren guns, mortars, and wireless transmitter sets were seized and secret miniature factories for the manufacture of the same, were uncovered. In explanation, the Muslims alleged that arms were planted by their enemies in deserted Muslim houses. That was not unlikely in some cases. But in a number of places, Sten guns and mortars were actually used by the Muslims in pitched battles.'[22] The problem of law and order in the capital was truly overwhelming.

Gandhi used his prayer meetings as the forum for preaching communal harmony and tolerance; 'Hindus and Sikhs,' he once told his audience, 'must be very brave here in the Indian Union. They must reach such heights of courage that even if every Hindu and Sikh gets killed in Pakistan, they must see that not a single Muslim is harmed here. If a Muslim is killed here, then it is cowardice, not courage.' It was, however, too much to expect that the masses of the people, and more especially those that had fled from their homes in Pakistan, could grasp the sublimity of the Mahatma's message, namely, that forgiveness is much nobler than revenge. In a period when the minds of even thinking persons were inflamed, Gandhi's teachings sounded strangely unrealistic and excited bitter criticism.

[22]Pyarelal, *MAHATMA GANDHI· THE LAST PHASE*, Vol. II, Navjivan Publishing House, 1958, p 437.

To promote a change of heart among his people, he went on a fast from January 12, 1948—his customary method of self-flagellation for the lapses of others—stipulating that he would end the ordeal 'if and when I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all communities brought about without any outside pressure but from an awakened sense of duty'.

Part of the reason for the Mahatma's action was to dissuade the Indian Government from withholding the sum of Rs. 55 crores due to be paid to Pakistan. According to the Indo-Pakistan Financial Settlement of December 1947, India's neighbour was to receive Rs. 75 crores as her share of the cash balances, out of which Rs. 20 crores had already been paid on the day of partition. The Indian Government was chary of parting with the balance on the ground that the additional resources would be used by Pakistan to buy military equipment for facing India in the Kashmir dispute. The Mahatma consulted Mountbatten on the rights and wrongs of the Government's attitude and was told in all frankness that it was both 'unstatesmanlike and unwise'. A few other persons were also of the same view. C. D. Deshmukh, who later became the Finance Minister of the Indian Union, advised the Government about the impolicy of withholding the promised amount. Some years afterwards Deshmukh wrote: 'Gandhiji naturally took the view that it would be wrong of India to go back on her word.'[23]. The communal and financial issues were, however, settled to the satisfaction of the Mahatma who consequently broke his fast on January 18.

Inscrutable forces had, however, by now ordained that the Mahatma, the Great Soul, should end his earthly sojourn, about which happening the world was forewarned through the misguided action of a young refugee from West Punjab who threw a bomb on January 20 when Gandhi was addressing a prayer meeting. Death, however, held no terror to this unique man, who had once declared: 'For

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[23]Deshmukh, C. D., *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA*, 1946-56. (Dadabhai Naoroji Memorial Lectures), Asia Publishing House, 1957, pp.59, 60.

many years I have accorded intellectual assent to the proposition that death is only a big change in life and nothing more and should be welcomed whenever it arrives........ I remember occasions in my life when I have rejoiced at the thought of approaching death as one might rejoice at the prospect of meeting a long-lost friend.' It was precisely with this invincible faith in the concept of death as a necessary change that Gandhi met his end on the 30th day of the same month. Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the assassin, was an educated young man from Poona, who believed, despite the perception vouchsafed to him by his liberal education, that he could save Hinduism by destroying the greatest man of the age.[24]

Lamenting the death of Gandhi, Nehru cried: 'The light has gone out of our lives..........Yet I am wrong, for the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light, ...and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it..... for the light represented the living truth.' His death was a world-wide calamity, because he wielded considerable moral influence in the cause of peace and brotherliness among men. Years before his martyrdom, he was hailed by Albert Einstein as a 'luminous contemporary—beacon to the generations to come'. Romain Rolland offered 'his fervent homage of love and veneration to our master and brother, Gandhi, who is realising in the heart and in action our ideal of humanity to come'. The well-known British humanist, Professor Gilbert Murray, wrote: 'The spiritual authority of one unarmed man over great multitudes is in itself wonderful, but when the man not only abjures violence and helps his enemies in their need, but also recognises his fallibility, he claims unanswerably the admiration of the whole world.' Lord Halifax wrote: 'In a way, and to a degree, quite unprecedented the strength and

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[24]Vincent Sheean, an American author, had a curious premonition about the violent end of Gandhi He wrote: 'I was so convinced of his martyrdom that I actually discussed it in considerable detail with New York editors before I set forth for India. It seemed to me implicit in the whole logic of his life and in the objective conditions which now surrounded him'

character of the national movement have been embodied in the person of Mr. Gandhi, whose devotion to ideals, and readiness to impose upon himself any sacrifice that he deemed necessary, have secured for him a unique position in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen.'[25] Sarojini Naidu's appreciation of the Mahatma was as brilliant as it was true. 'He taught us to be just,' she said, 'when it is so much easier to be generous.' On hearing of Gandhi's death, Jinnah for his part described him as 'one of the greatest men produced by the Hindu community and a leader who commanded their universal confidence and respect'.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was indeed the supreme sacrifice exacted by the two-nation doctrine which drew its strength and sustenance from hatred and fanaticism. The separatist creed of the Muslim League and the complete lack of restraint with which it was preached, destroyed beyond repair the unity of India, which could win her redemption only through partition and by a complete severance of all ties with men and organizations that had inflicted so much underserved misery upon millions of people; whether inside the council hall or at cabinet meetings, whether in public places or at private gatherings, the untenable but ubiquitous two-nation doctrine confronted the people, embittering their hearts and minds against one another. With honourable exceptions, officials too took sides and made efficient and impartial administration impossible. It has been suggested that India's partition and its terrible aftermath could have been avoided if the Congress had accepted the Cripps offer. It is perhaps pleasant to make conjectures along these lines, but the struggle of Indian nationalism was not against the forces of communalism but against foreign rule, and the Cripps proposals conceded nothing in that direction. Transfer of power to an undivided India could have been possible only if the gesture had been made before the champions of separatism had gained ascendancy over the Muslim mind.

[25]*MAHATMA GANDHI:* Essays and Reflections on his life, presented to him on his Seventieth Birthday, October 2, edited by Dr. S Radhakrishnan, G. Allen & Unwin, 1939, p 330.

Sufficient has already been said about the hardships and humiliations to which the Congress members were subjected in the Coalition Ministry at the Centre. In his address to the Royal Empire Society in London, Lord Ismay declared that never in history had there been a more incompatible team of Ministers. Most astounding things were being done to mortgage the future of India heavily. In November 1947, Sardar Patel disclosed at Nagpur how the Political Department had secretly planned to sell the resources of Bastar state to the Nizam. His orders for the relevant papers to be placed before him were ignored. 'It was then,' said the Sardar, 'that I was made fully conscious of the extent to which our interests were being prejudiced in every way by the machinations of the Political Department, and came to the conclusion that the sooner we were rid of these, the better for us I came to the conclusion that the best course was to hasten the departure of these foreigners even at the cost of the partition of the country. It was also then that I felt that there was one way to make the country safe and strong, and that was the unification of the rest of India.'[26] But it was, as we have seen, not the Sardar alone who opted for this desperate remedy. Indeed, except perhaps for the Nationalist Muslims and some others, there was virtual unanimity in the country for its division as the price to be paid for the restoration of peace and tranquillity and for ensuring its future progress. It is true that the economic consequences of the partition were serious, but the damage could be repaired in course of time by developing the resources of the rest of India, as her policy-makers have been doing by means of a series of five-year plans. To-day, India is the architect of her own fortune—a freedom of action she would never have gained had she, by surrendering to mere sentiment, accepted an ineffective Centre as a *quid pro quo* for preserving her territorial integrity.

If the birth of Pakistan was unavoidable, there is no such inevitability that she should be in perpetual conflict with

[26]Pyarelal, *MAHATMA GANDHI THE LAST PHASE,* Vol II, Navjivan Publishing House, 1958, p 153.

India. The seceding regions comprise some 29 per cent. of the area and 35 per cent. of the population of what was known as British India.[27] Pakistan is not only the largest 'Islamic state', but is also the fifth biggest country in the world. Neither its founder nor his able lieutenant, Liaqat Ali Khan, lived long enough to shape its destiny in the manner of their own choice. Jinnah stated on numerous occasions that he had never expected to realise his dream in his lifetime, and the magnitude and the suddenness of his achievement suffuced his fragile body with an exultation, the force of which it could not sustain. Moreover, for some time, he was not in good health which also accounted for his inability to play an active or decisive role in Pakistan after its creation. He died on September 11, 1948, plunging his country and his Indian friends into profound sorrow.

Jinnah, according to any standard of appraisal, was an outstanding man. He was inspired by an overwhelming sense of leadership and pursued his ideas and ideals with a determination that recognised no obstacle or defeat. The essential quality of his eminence was, however, one of negativism which he transformed into a formidable weapon and wielded it with devastating effect He was mightily shrewd and competent in transmuting his own predilections into the political goal of the entire Muslim community, and by adroitly giving his co-religionists the heady slogan of Pakistan, which suited their foibles and fancies admirably, he succeeded in acting upon them like a galvanic needle. He was cold and unfeeling and considered no objective more exalted than the pursuit of his own ambitions. His speeches and writings were not a model of courtesy to his political opponents and his contempt and hatred for the Indian triumvirate, Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, amounted to an obsession—an attitude of mind which he failed to correct even after he had won a new dominion for himself. 'He is utterly convinced,' says Campbell-Johnson, 'that the Indian leaders' real aim is to strangle Pakistan at birth.' In another context, the same unimpeachable authority

[27]Menon, V. P, *THE TRANSFER OF POWER IN INDIA*, Orient Longmans, p 404.

writes: 'He (Jinnah) kept harping on the masochistic theme that India was out to destroy the nation of his making, and his attitude to every personality and act of policy across the border was coloured by that general assumption.'[28] His greatest creation, Pakistan, which could 'never stand up to constructive criticism', would perhaps have remained a remote dream, had not abnormal circumstances and British policy made it practicable Nevertheless, Jinnah has won a place in history, albeit with few parallels to match his peculiar greatness Three years after his death, Liaqat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first Prime Minister, was assassinated at Rawalpindi, on October 16, 1951, leaving the country leaderless for many years. To-day India's neighbour is under the government of a soldier, General Ayub Khan, whose policies and pronouncements have failed to improve the relations between the two countries.

Perhaps, even more disastrous to India's unity than the secession of the Muslim zones from the country was the disposition envisaged for the princely states after the transfer of power to Indian hands Abrogation of British paramountcy over the states, it was contended, would release them from all their past and present obligations to the suzerain power, besides rendering them free agents to decide whether or not to enter into new political relations with the successor governments of India and Pakistan. The abortive Cripps scheme of March 1942 gave the princes option to adhere to or stay away from the proposed Indian constitution, but at the same time, the need for negotiating a revision of the prevailing treaty arrangements was recognised. In its Memorandum of May 16, 1946 the British Cabinet Mission declared that 'the relationship which has hitherto existed between the rulers of the States and the British Crown will no longer be possible Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor trans-

[28]Campbell-Johnson narrates an incident which gives a revealing insight into Jinnah's frame of mind "Only to-day (June 28, 1947) Mountbatten received a letter from Jinnah which provoked the strongest reaction I have ever heard from the usually bland and urbane Ismay. 'It was a letter' he said 'which I would not take from my King or send to a coolie'."

ferred to the new Government'. Earlier, in its Memorandum, dated May 12, 1946, presented to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, the Cabinet Mission had urged the same point of view. The document read: 'This means that the rights of the States which flow from their relationship to the Crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the States to the paramount power will return to the States.' In his announcement of February 20, 1947, the British Prime Minister reiterated the Cabinet Mission's point of view by saying that his government did not 'intend to hand over their powers and obligations under paramountcy to any Government of British India'. The famous proposals for the partition of India dated June 3, 1947, were explicitly stated to be applicable only to British India, the future of the states being governed by the earlier pronouncements.

The political arrangement ordained for the princely states by the British Government was undoubtedly strange but explicable. It was certainly not actuated by animosity or spite, but was in fact a necessary consequence of the time-honoured policy of the Paramount Power in relation to its feudatories. However untenable and absurd, the doctrine of the states' direct relationship with the British Crown was an essential ingredient of this policy. The Butler Committee which, as we have seen, was so categorical in rejecting all princely claims that amounted to a derogation from the paramountcy rights of the British Government in India, had no hesitation in upholding the patently untenable thesis of direct relationship. Besides, in spite of their manifest futility and worthlessness, the treaties and engagements with the states had been accorded such sanctity that they had come to be regarded as the very ark of the Covenant. It was obviously impossible for the British Government to repudiate at the time of its withdrawal from India the very basis on which it had built up its relations with the states for such a long period merely because it was no longer necessary for it to maintain all such elaborate pretences.

But, however great its anxiety to uphold the consistency of its policy, the legacy which the retiring government proposed to leave to India was both unjust and dangerous. The upbringing and the outlook of the generality of the princes was well-known and their representations before the Butler Committee had made it clear how devoted they were to their own interests They had then asked for a minor modification of the paramountcy system and they were now given the choice of repudiating it altogether. What would have been the fate of India if all the five hundred odd principalities or even a small number of them had been allowed to become sovereign and self-regarding entities? 'An India,' wrote Professor Coupland, 'deprived of the States would have lost all coherence. For they form a great cruciform barrier separating all four quarters of the country. If no more than the Central Indian States and Hyderabad and Mysore were excluded from the Union, the United Provinces would be almost completely cut off from Bombay, and Bombay completely from Sind. The strategic and economic implications are obvious enough. The practicability of Pakistan must be admitted, but the more the separation of the States from British India is considered, the more impracticable it seems. India could live if its Moslem limbs in the North-West and North-East were amputated, but could it live without its heart?'[29]

The constitutional position enunciated by the British Government on the extinction of paramountcy obligations towards the states was not accepted by any of the leading Indian experts Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer, a distinguished lawyer from Madras and an authority on constitutional law, contested the Cabinet Mission's thesis and asked why a Government that was to inherit the sovereignty of India from the British, should also not succeed to the rights of paramountcy over the states Failure to recognise this fact would, he warned, lead to confusion and to a reversion to conditions similar to those witnessed in the country after the fall of the Moghul Empire.

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[29] *WHITE PAPER ON INDIAN STATES*, Government of India, 1950, pp.33, 34.

The princes did not, of course, leave much room for doubt as to what they proposed to do after the abolition of British paramountcy. At a meeting of the Chamber of Princes, held on January 29, 1947, its members adopted a resolution which affirmed that the states were untrammelled in deciding their own future. 'Paramountcy,' the resolution said, 'will terminate at the close of the interim period and will not be transferred to or inherited by the new Government of India. All the rights surrendered by the States to the Paramount Power will return to the States.' Speeches were made at the meeting emphasizing the importance of presenting 'a united front in the face of common danger'. The British Government's decision of June 3 to transfer power to Indian hands by dividing the country gave a further impetus to the princes' separatist ambitions.

The Nizam declared on June 12 that 'the result in law of the departure of the paramount power in the near future will be that I shall become entitled to resume the status of an independent sovereign'. Hyderabad, he added, would not accede to either Dominion since 'the basis of the division of British India is communal'. The Nawab of Bhopal, a shining light of the princely Order and Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, openly and persistently preached against the States' accession to the Indian Union and when his disruptive campaign proved abortive, he resigned his Chancellorship and declared that his state would assume 'an independent status' as soon as British paramountcy was withdrawn.[30] He had no heart in India and this is borne out by the following views of a competent observer. 'As the ablest Moslem Prince, I would guess he is not averse to playing an important role in the higher politics of Pakistan. He has for some time been one of Jinnah's closest advisers. Unhappily for him, his State is predominantly Hindu and in the heart of Indian territory.'[31] Only four days before India's independence, Sardar Patel wrote to Gandhi. 'For the

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[30]Menon, V P., *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, p 84

[31]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN,* Robert Hale, 1951, p.147.

last fifteen days I have been occupied with the Princes It is so taxing. There seems to be no end to the Nawab of Bhopal's intrigues. He is working day and night to cause a split among the Princes and to keep them out of the Indian Union.'[32] The Muslim League and the Political Department of the Government of India, with Sir Conrad Corfield as Adviser, were also active participants in the crusade against the integration of the States into the country's organic unity. The Political Department, Menon writes, "encouraged the Nawab of Bhopal in the efforts to evolve a 'Third Force' out of the States and reports were being brought to me by some of the rulers that they were being instigated not to accede to India".[33]

All this was, of course, understandable since nothing better could be expected from the persons and parties that worked against the interests of this country, but the behaviour of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore, was most surprising. Aiyar is a brilliant man, an able lawyer, a competent administrator, a liberal politician and a sound scholar, besides being deeply attached to the ancient heritage of the land. And yet none of these estimable qualities stood him in good stead when, like Hyderabad and Bhopal, he put forward the astonishing proposition about the so-called pre-existing sovereignty of Travancore The state, he claimed, was independent in 1795 and would acquire that status again when the British withdrew from the country, with freedom to 'deal either with the outside world or any government in that world'. He announced his intention to appoint a Trade Agent in Pakistan The Princes, who not long before were not permitted to correspond with one another, had now suddenly developed a global outlook. The young and impetuous Maharaja of Jodhpur, who died in an air crash near his capital on January 26, 1952 at the age of twenty-eight, and the rulers of Indore and Jaisalmer were among the

[32]Pyarelal, *MAHATMA GANDHI: THE LAST PHASE,* Vol II, Navjivan Publishing House, 1958, p 332

[33]Menon, V. P, *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, 1956, p 113

misguided princes who for some time remained impervious to the promptings of reason and patriotism.

This was the situation that confronted Sardar Patel when, besides the Home portfolio, he took charge of the newly formed States Ministry in July 1947, with the able and experienced V. P. Menon, as Secretary. All impartial observers were agreed that the task entrusted to the Sardar was of baffling complexity and magnitude. Sir Archibald Nye, who as the Governor of Madras and later as England's first High Commissioner in India, had intimate knowledge of the Indian problem, said that he had practically despaired of any friendly settlement with the princes and had in fact 'visualised trouble of incalculable dimensions after the 15th August'. Sardar Patel, however, rose to the occasion and, by a skillful display of tact and firmness, succeeded in disarming and subjugating the dissidents who were soon taught the error of their ways when the majority of the princes responded to his plea for patriotism. On July 5, in what may truly be called an epoch-making statement, the inspiration for which was derived from Abraham Lincoln's famous appeal to the Southern States of America on the eve of the civil war, the Sardar reminded the rulers about the historic ties that bound them to their motherland and asked that their future relations should be governed by the 'compulsive logic of mutual interests'. He readily sympathised with them in their dissatisfaction with the paramountcy system since it underlined their subordination more than their status as partners. His government would not, therefore, seek to perpetuate the hateful system, the abolition of which would be permanent. The Sardar, however, reminded the rulers that the paramountcy of 'popular interests and welfare' would 'always remain'. They had already accepted the basic principle that for Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Communications, they would come into the Indian Union. 'We ask,' he said, 'no more of them than accession on these three subjects in which the common interests of the country are involved', and reinforced his plea for co-operation with the warning that the

alternative to it would be 'anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin.'[34]

The States Minister's appeal to the princes to join the Indian Constituent Assembly was supported by Mountbatten in an address to the special session of the Chamber of Princes on July 25, 1947. The Crown Representative told them that the Indian Independence Act released them from all obligations to the Paramount Power and that they would become technically and legally free after Indian independence. Nevertheless, it was dangerous to break the link that had so long bound the two parts of the country together before making some other workable arrangement to take its place. 'If nothing is put in its place,' he warned, 'only chaos can result, and that chaos, I submit, will hurt the States first — the bigger the State the lesser the hurt and the longer it will takes to feel it—but even the biggest of the States will feel the hurt just the same as any small State' He also reminded the princes that, although they were at liberty to accede to either of the Dominions, it was impossible that they could evade 'certain geographical compulsions.'[35]

The machinations of the dissident group among the princes greatly strengthened the hands of both the Viceroy and the Minister. Though their number was distressingly small, there were always patriotic rulers who disdained to subordinate the wider interests of the country to self-aggrandizement. Prominent among such patriots who supported the Indian cause at this critical juncture, was the late Maharaja Sir Sadul Singh of Bikaner who frustrated the designs of the disruptionists by telling his fellow-princes that the only policy for the states to follow was to 'work fully with the stabilizing elements in British India to create a centre at least for as large a section of India as possible to start with....' His eloquent plea for consolidating the national unity was ably supported by the Maharaja of Patiala His Highness of Baroda, though he later invited

[34] *WHITE PAPER ON INDIAN STATES,* Government of India, 1950, pp 157-159.

[35] *SPEECHES BY THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA,* Government of India, 1947-48, p 24.

trouble and punishment for his eccentricities and extravagances, was the first ruler to sign the Instrument of Accession. With the representatives of the States of Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patiala and Rewa taking their seats in the Constituent Assembly on April 18, 1947, the backbone of the separatists was broken. By August 15, all the states, except Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagadh, had signed the Instruments of Accession, accompanied by Standstill Agreements enabling the continuance for the time being of all agreements and engagements in matters of common concern between the states and the Indian Union. A grave danger to the internal security of the country was thus averted, since united action on the part of the states, which had acquired large armies during the second World War, if directed against a weak and distracted government of free India, would have been most formidable.

The stage was now set for one of the most astonishing political revolutions in history. The princes soon realised that the abolition of paramountcy with its tutelary functions deprived them of their only means of survival. Apart from the inherent inability of most of the states to provide modern administrations to their people, it was no longer possible to govern them on the basis of outmoded principles. A number of non-viable principalities were, therefore, annexed to the neighbouring provinces, while many others in geographical propinquity to one another were grouped together and brought under the direct control of the Central Government. The third disposition also consisted of the consolidation of the states under a single administration with the Rajpramukh as the constitutional head. The leader and first model for such grouping was the United States of Kathiawar or Saurashtra which came into existence on February 15, 1948. Many ancient and historic states such as those of Rajasthan abandoned their separate existence, thus paving the way for a closer integration of the Union territories. The original Instruments of Accession were discarded as being out of date and in the matter of constitutional division of powers, the govern-

ments of the States Unions were brought in line with those of the neighbouring provinces. Thus, by the three-fold process of assimilation, centralisation and unification, the five hundred odd mutually exclusive and disparate principalities were eventually absorbed into India's wider unity.

The former princes' territory was assigned its due place in the Constitution of India, promulgated on January 26, 1950. The States in Part B category consisted of Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Bharat, Mysore, Patiala and East Punjab States Union, Rajasthan, Saurashtra, Travancore-Cochin and Vindhya Pradesh, while those comprising Part C States under the direct control of the Central Government included Bhopal, Bilaspur, Cooch-Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Kutch, Manipur and Tripura. In spite of its obvious improvement upon the old dispensation, the new system was, however, both anomalous and unpopular. The division of the Union territories into three categories was resented by the people belonging to the last two, who urged that no distinction either in the status or the pattern of the administration in the different constituent units of the country should be allowed to persist. The institution of Rajpramukh, it was urged, was an anachronism and should, therefore, be abolished. These contentions were upheld by the States Reorganisation Commission which was appointed in December 1953 to make recommendations for redrawing the administrative map of India mainly on a linguistic basis [36] Following the Commission's recommendations in 1955, the distinction between the various units of India was finally abolished.

Not a vestige of the former princely states exists in India to-day. Though denied the prestige and the instrumentalities of paramountcy, the Government of free India was able to accomplish this mighty task without conflict or bloodshed The country is deeply beholden to Sardar Patel for this amazing achievement. The Sardar was truly a remarkable man, who combined with his naturally generous and democratic disposition, the firmness and

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[36] *REPORT OF THE STATES REORGANISATION COMMISSION*, Government of India, 1955, p 67.

sagacity of Bismarck. The princes found in him, not a ruthless task-master or a heartless annexationist, but a sincere friend and a far-sighted statesman and administrator. Opposition to his exalted mission would, therefore, have been as unworthy as it would have been useless. Under the new dispensation, the princes have lost nothing except their gilded manacles. The competent ones among them, who have surmounted sloth and abandoned enervating ease and luxury, have found ample opportunities both for national service and personal distinction. For instance, the Maharaja of Mysore, the young Maharajas of Baroda and Bikaner and the Yuvraj of Kashmir have good reason to look forward to a long and notable career of public service.

The story of the states would, however, be incomplete without a description of the downfall of Hyderabad and Junagadh and the disputed accession of Kashmir to India.

As the previous chapters have made it abundantly clear, Hyderabad, like Oudh in the pre-mutiny period, was an incurable canker in the Indian body politic. Soon after the announcement of the British decision to withdraw from the country, the Nizam, forgetting the whole range of the unpleasant and unedifying historical facts about the weakness of his state, asserted sovereign dignity for himself, dismissing all other princes, from whom he was in fact inseparable, as mere nobles. Hyderabad, claimed a document issued by his government, 'is a country and is organised as a country'. Pampered as 'His Exalted Highness', the Indian Croesus, who, however, lives like a chronically indigent person, was burdened with qualities of pride, arrogance and stubborness that were bound to drag him by the collar to his doom. 'He is a Prince of the old school,' wrote Campbell-Johnson after interviewing the Nizam, 'arrogant and stubbornness that were bound to drag him by the collar a self-willed autocrat, with exaggerated notions about his own importance, and governed the state in precisely the same mediaeval manner as its founder did, the aim and object of the administration being to glorify the ruler and

to benefit the 'fascist minority'.[37] Both the events and the observations of impartial men prove that the Nizam did not lose his dominion due to imbecility.[38] Sir Walter Monckton, his Constitutional Adviser, the Nawab of Chhatari and Sir Sultan Ahmed were men of great perception and could be trusted to guard his interests with zeal and loyalty. And yet the counsel of none of them prevailed.

The Indian Government made no unreasonable claims on the Nizam It merely asked that Hyderabad should accede to the Union on the limited subjects of Defence, External Affairs and Communications, over none of which the state had ever exercised its jurisdiction under British suzerainty. With admirable foresight, the Nehru Cabinet entrusted the task of negotiating an agreement with the Nizam to Mountbatten. After a good deal of hesitation and bargaining on the side of Hyderabad, a Standstill Agreement was signed by the two Governments on November 29, 1947. The terms of the agreement were in many ways unfavourable to India and lent plausibility to the Nizam's assertion that Hyderabad was really unique among the princely states. For the doubtful benefit of securing his assurance of adhesion to India, she committed herself not to send or station her troops in the state except in times of

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37 *WHITE PAPER ON HYDERABAD*, 1948, p 31.

38 Writing on May 15, 1948, Campbell-Johnson says about the Nizam 'I saw no evidence of the Nizam being a prisoner.' The Nizam's encounter with Jinnah in an earlier year provides useful insight into the character of both the men. The League leader had called on the ruler of Hyderabad to dissuade him from appointing Sir Mirza Ismail as his Prime Minister as Sir Mirza had refused to endorse his communal doctrines Nawab Hosh Yar Jung gave the following account of the interview to Sir Mirza. Jinnah entered the room of the Nizam smoking a cigar and seated himself in the chair in front of His Exalted Highness with his legs outstretched 'Do you know who I am? Is this the way you behave towards the Nizam of Hyderabad?' The attack went home; the visitor withdrew his legs and threw away the offending cigar. But the storm having burst, apology did not ease the situation. The Nizam swamped him with angry questions 'What do you want? What do you want to tell me?' When Jinnah raised the question of Sir Mirza's appointment, he rejoined. 'I do not want any outside interference in my affairs. I can take care of the interests of my people I do not wish to discuss this matter with you' (Sir Mirza Ismail, *MY PUBLIC LIFE*, pp 98-99).

war, thus forswearing her responsibility for its good government and internal security. Her willingness to appoint an Agent in Hyderabad and to receive one from the Nizam postulated that she was treating with an equal. Further, she committed herself not only not to claim any paramountcy righs over the other party, but also to invoke the aid of an arbitrator in the event of a dispute or difference of opinion with the Hyderabad Government. Even on the three subjects which the state was purported to have surrendered, the Indian Union's jurisdiction was most equivocal. There was thus little to commend a compact which bore all the traces of surrender on the part of Delhi, its only redeeming feature, in the words of Nehru, being that it meant 'peace for one year'. But the Prime Minister was mistaken. The Hyderabad Government had no intention of entering into cordial or lasting accord with India since its sympathies were all with Pakistan. The ties of religion, it seemed, were much stronger than the sense of obligation and loyalty to one's own country.

No time was lost by Hyderabad in reducing the November agreement to a dead letter. K. M. Munshi, the able and alert Indian Agent in the state, watched with anxiety the growing bellicosity of both the administration and the Muslim faction which, being desperately fearful for their inherited power over the helpless and grievously-wronged Hindu majority, were preparing themselves frantically to go to any length to retain their unjust prerogatives. The appointment of Mir Laik Ali as the Nizam's Prime Minister put a premium on extremism. Kasim Razvi, a lawyer by profession but a fanatic and a gangster by choice and disposition, imposed a reign of terror both inside the state and in the border areas with the aid of the rowdies and ruffians that flocked to his Razakar banner. He frequently held out dire threats to India and warned her that his 'Muslim brothers in the Indian Union will be our fifth columnists'. The withdrawal of the Indian troops from Hyderabad further emboldened the miscreants to terrorise the population. The unfriendliness between the Nizam and Jinnah was forgotten and a loan of Rs. 20 crores was

advanced to the Pakistan Government. Gun-running and violent propaganda against India and her leaders assumed menacing proportions. An Englishman was commissioned to negotiate the purchase of Goa for Hyderabad from the Portuguese, while El Edroos, Commander-in-Chief of the State forces, went on a mission to Europe to buy arms. Forgetting his pledge of good-will towards India, Jinnah openly and in violation of international behaviour, championed the Nizam's cause. On June 1, 1948, the Governor-General of Pakistan declared that the Nizam's dominion was 'an independent sovereign State' and that 'not only the Muslims of Pakistan but Muslims all the world over fully sympathise with Hyderabad in its struggle' He did not, however, explain what precisely Hyderabad was 'struggling' for.

The growing aggressiveness of the Laik Ali administration and the mounting lawlessness in the state at last forced the Government of India to take decisive action against it. The remonstrances of C Rajagapalachari, who had succeeded Mountbatten in June 1948 as the Governor-General, were brushed aside by the Nizam who allowed his Government to spend prodigious sums of money on warlike preparations and propaganda. By the time police action was taken against the State in September, it had spent as much as Rs. 22 crores on these projects! The Indian troops marched into the Nizam's dominion on September 13 under the command of Major-General J N. Chaudhuri and entered Hyderabad City on the 18th, having accepted the surrender of the opposing army on the previous day. The whole operation was over within 108 hours, thus proving once more that the strength of Hyderabad consisted not in itself but in the power of its protectors The civil administration, which had fallen into total disrepair, was revived and rendered efficient through the labours of D S Bakhle, an able and experienced Bombay Civilian, and his team of officials drawn from the neighbouring provinces. Munshi testified that, as Civil Administrator, Bakhle 'worked wonders' in Hyderabad The Nizam, who functioned as Rajpramukh for some time, has now retired into his

palace, perhaps belatedly regretting his imprudence and impetuosity that hastened the dissolution of his dynasty.[39]

In flagrant repudiation of the 'geographical compulsions' to which Mountbatten had referred when advising the states on the issue of accession, the Nawab of Junagadh, opted for Pakistan solely on grounds of his religious affinity with that country. The two territories are not accessible to one another except by sea. The Nawab was a notorious eccentric, whose main concern in life was to look after his dogs at the ruinous expense of his people's welfare. In 1947, he appointed Sir Shah Nawaz Khan Bhutto, a Muslim League politician from Sind, as his Dewan and thus came under the spell of Jinnah who advised him to stave off the issue of accession to India till August 15. On the same date, the Nawab announced his adhesion to Pakistan and coerced the smaller principalities in his State against making common cause with this country. The object of this high-handed and suicidal policy was to preserve the hegemony of the Muslim minority in the State. Writing to Jinnah, Bhutto said: 'Though the Muslim population of Junagadh is nearly 20 per cent. and non-Muslims form 80 per cent., seven lakhs Muslims of Kathiawar survived because of Junagadh. I consider that no sacrifice is too great to preserve the prestige, honour and rule of His Highness and to protect Islam and the Muslims of Kathiawar.' Jinnah guaranteed to protect the integrity of the state by offering to send 'seven companies of Crown police to its aid' so that Junagadh might continue to be looked upon as the bastion of reactionary minorities in Kathiawar More than one hundred thousand Hindus abandoned their homes and sought refuge outside the state consequent on the aggressive policy of its authorities, but soon the Nawab followed their example when he realised that the Government of India would not delay firm action against him. Pakistan willingly gave asylum to the fugitive prince and continues to cham-

[39] Mir Laik Ali, who was under house-arrest in Hyderabad after the police action, escaped to Pakistan in March 1950 Kasim Razvi who had been sentenced to eight years' rigourous imprisonment in a dacoity case, was released in 1959. He migrated to Pakistan where, it is presumed, he is leading the life of a chastened man

pion his 'cause' even after his death. Following a referendum held in February 1948, Junagadh and the adjoining minor principalities acceded to the Indian Union.[40]

In trying to appreciate the nature of the Indo-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, it is necessary to understand what attitude the two countries bore towards the vital question of the states' accession. India, represented by the Congress, maintaineed that the states were an integral part of the country and that if any sovereignty vested in them, it was derived entirely from their people. This explains why the challenge to autocratic governments in the states, including Kashmir, was offered by popular movements controlled or countenanced by the Congress. The Muslim League and its leader did not share any of these points of view. Jinnah in fact insisted that the states were sovereign entities and, as we have just seen, openly affirmed his doctrine in the Hyderabad episode. He further asserted, as in the Hyderabad and Junagadh cases, that the ruler of a state was at perfect liberty to commit the fortunes of his state to either Dominion without his action being called into question legally or constitutionally. India, on the contrary, held that in all cases of disputed accession, the verdict of the people concerned should be decisive.

According to all impartial testimony, the accession of Kashmir to India was rendered inevitable by the impatience and the aggressive behaviour of Pakistan. The ruler of the state had invited both India and Pakistan to sign a Standstill Agreement with him, with the object of legalising the *status quo* under the new dispensation for a specific period so that he could have time to reflect on what would be the best permanent arrangement for his state. Pakistan signed the agreement, but India did not. With the full authority of his Government, Mountbatten assured the Maharaja that no difficulties would be created by this country if he chose to accede to the neighbouring Dominion. 'Indeed,' says Campbell-Johnson. 'the States Ministry, under Sardar Patel's direction, went out of its way to take

[40] *WHITE PAPER ON INDIAN STATES*, Government of India, 1950, pp.113, 114.

no action which could be interpreted as forcing Kashmir's hand and to give assurances that accessión to Pakistan would not be taken amiss by India.'[41]

Pakistan was, however, anxious that the Kashmir plum should fall into her lap even before it was ripe. The Standstill Agreement was brushed aside and a rigorous economic blockade was enforced against the state. For some inexplicable reason, she blundered into precipitate action, which has cost Kashmir and the two countries heavily. The frontier tribesmen were incited and given the right of way to invade and despoil the fair valley. Both arms and leadership were supplied to the raiders whose incursions into the state assumed the proportions of a full-scale invasion by October 22, 1947. Many important towns and strategic places in the valley were soon overrun and the road to Srinagar, the state's capital, lay exposed. The disciplined attackers captured Uri on October 27 and on the following day Baramula fell. They swept forward and did not stop till they reached Patan, only seventeen miles from Srinagar. The inhumanities practised by the invaders on the helpless inhabitants are now well-known facts of history and gruesome details of their barbarism have found a place in many contemporary journals and books, of which a good number are by foreign writers. Nothing was held sacred or decent by the raiders and even Christain missionaries and nuns were hacked to death. And yet the invasion of these cruel men was defended by Pakistan as representing an attempt on their part to emancipate their co-religionists in the state from what she described as she 'Dogra tyranny'.

Notorious for his dilatoriness and incompetence, the Maharaja woke up when almost everything was lost. He frantically applied to the Indian Government for help and qualified himself for it by signing an Instrument of Accession on October 26th. It was only then and not before that India began to evince real interest in the future of the state. The accession was endorsed by Sheikh Abdullah,

[41]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN*, Robert Hale, 1951. p.223.

leader of the state's largest popular party, the National Conference. Besides, in pursuance of its self-imposed policy, the Government of India undertook to refer the issue of accession to popular vote in due course. Its commitment was, however, not to Pakistan, but to the people of Kashmir.[42] From October 27, without any planning or preparation, troops were airlifted from India to Srinagar,—a feat that has been described by competent observers as 'a remarkable hairs-breadth military operation'. In a month's time, the raiders were pushed back beyond Uri, sixty-five miles from Srinagar. Defending India's action in saving Kashmir from utter ruin, Nehru claimed on November 2· 'Not to have taken those steps would have been a betrayal of a trust and cowardly submission to the law of the sword with its accompaniment of arson, rape and slaughter.' It is indeed impossible to challenge this assertion Writing in his weekly paper, the *New Statesman and Nation,* on February 20, 1948 after a personal observation of the happenings in the state, the well-known British journalist, Kingsley Martin, said: 'There is no possible doubt that if India had not intervened last October, Srinagar and the lovely valley of Kashmir would now be a devastated and blackened ruin.'

Pakistan did not, however, endorse any such point of view On November 4, 1947, her Prime Minister condemned the state's accession to India as 'a fraud, perpetrated on the people of Kashmir by its cowardly ruler with the aggressive help of the Indian Government'—a type of language that is normally employed when argument and logic fail The invading tribesmen were not a state, but a state was behind them, although it took many months for Pakistan to admit this fact Jinnah was deeply mortified by his failure to annex Kashmir, especially after he had expected to ride in triumph into the state[43] An open rupture between the two countries was narrowly avoided

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[42]Riding on the crest of popularity, Sheikh Abdullah over-reached himself and fell His downfall was contrived in 1953 by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a patriotic and resourceful nationalist Muslim.

[43]Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *MISSION WITH MOUNTBATTEN,* Robert Hale, 1951, p.225.

through the intervention of the Supreme Commander, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, who successfully dissuaded the Pakistani Governor-General from insisting on marching his troops into the state. In December 1947, India took her case to the United Nations at the instance of Mountbatten who suggested this course of action to prevent a full-scale Indo-Pakistani war on the Kashmir issue.

Since then, much has been written about the rights and wrongs of Kashmir's accession to India. There cannot be any doubt that both from the point of view of the British Government's pronouncements and Pakistan's own stand on the principles governing the accession of a state to either Dominion, the action of the Maharaja was unexceptionable. Pakistan's main claim to Kashmir rests on the fact that it is a Muslim-majority area. One is entitled to ask whether any such consideration prevailed with her when attempts were made by her to secure the accession of the overwhelmingly Hindu-majority states of Junagadh, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer.[44] Her refusal to vacate her aggression in the Kashmir territory rendered it impossible for India to submit the issue of the state's final accession to the vote of its people. In his carefully documented report on Kashmir, Sir Owen Dixon, the United Nations Mediator, declared in September 1950 that when the frontier of Jammu and Kashmir was crossed by 'hostile elements' in October 1947, 'it was contrary to international law' and that when units of regular Pakistani forces moved into the territory of the state 'that too was inconsistent with international law'. That position persists to this day, making it impossible for India to fulfil her commitment on the question of holding a plebiscite in the state.

More than a decade has rolled by since the dispute arose A more practicable and less dangerous *modus vivendi* than that of a plebiscite should be found to settle this long-standing quarrel. Since the state's accession to Pakistan is demanded almost entirely on religious grounds, it is inconceivable how communal passions can be avoided when the support

[44]Menon, V. P., *THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES,* Orient Longmans, 1956, pp.412-413.

of the masses is canvassed. The consequences of reviving the insidious 'two-nation' doctrine are too serious to be contemplated with equanimity and it certainly is not the path of prudence to risk another communal convulsion in the Indian sub-continent. On January 24, 1960, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan announced his refusal to accept the present arrangement in the state as the basis for a permanent settlement 'There are,' he said, 'three parties to the Kashmir dispute, namely, India, Pakistan, and the people of Kashmir, and there are three aspects of this problem, namely, economic, defence and political. Any solution must reconcile and satisfy all these.' Surely, the only means of securing these goals is not by risking another holocaust. Meanwhile, a solution of the Kashmir problem remains an imperative need, not only to promote greater concord between the two countries, but also to enable them to spend less on armaments.[45]

Mountbatten did not stay in India to witness the completion of the bloodless revolution inaugurated with such tact and moderation during his regime. His major task was in fact accomplished with the transfer of power in August 1947, although his willingness to remain in office till the middle of the following year was of immense value in helping the historian to achieve a true perspective of the momentous happenings in the Indian sub-continent during those months. Some writers have held the view that by his impatience at gradualness, and by shortening the period for the transfer of power, Mountbatten unwittingly paved the way for the mighty displacement of populations and its accompaniment of misery and bitterness. It is impossible to test the tenability of this charge when there is no means of knowing what the state of the country would have been in June 1948. Perhaps the best answer to the criticism

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[45]Among the grievances of the Pakistan leaders against Mountbatten, his guidance to India on the accession of Kashmir was one. The animosity has not disappeared with the passage of years and it became evident in March 1956 when he was forbidden passage over Pakistan territory on his way to India for a visit to naval establishments in his capacity as Britain's First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy.

consists in the observation of no less a person than Mountbatten's successor, C. Rajagopalachari, that 'there might well have been no power to transfer' if it had been delayed till the previously determined date.

It is significant that the work begun in India by the great commoner, Warren Hastings, should have been completed by a person of royal lineage. No man could have accomplished this historic mission with greater grace and sincerity In his attitude towards India and her aspirations Mountbatten belonged to the school of British Indian statesmen that flourished in the pre-mutiny period. Men like Hastings and Munro, to mention only two names, had the vision and sagacity to realise the transitoriness of empires. They did not regard Indians as mere objects worthy of conquest and contempt and grasped the need for sympathy, appreciation and understanding between the two countries. Hastings was convinced that promotion of mutual good-will and respect was 'the crux of the mighty problem that faced his country in acquiring an Indian empire'.[46] Munro believed that there would always be high-minded Indians passionately devoted to the independence of their country and declared that he had a better opinon of the people of this country than 'to think that the spirit will ever be completely extinguished'.[47]

There was a complete reversal of Britain's liberal attitude towards India after the revolt of 1857. Both the outbreak and its suppression, hardened the feelings of the two races against one another, besides encouraging the exultant feeling in many British breasts that the suppression of the Mutiny was a virtual reconquest of the country. It was not, as we have seen, a pre-planned or a country-wide rebellion, but the unbridled ferocity with which it was put down provoked among all classes of Indians feelings of bitterness that could not be lived down for some generations. 'We have conquered India at the point of the sword and we shall hold her by the same means'—that represen-

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[46]Davies, A. Mervyn, *WARREN HASTINGS: MAKER OF BRITISH INDIA,* Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935, p 425

[47]Gleig, G. R, *THE LIFE OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR THOMAS MUNRO,* Vol. I, Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1830, p 464.

-ted the general attitude of the British rulers of the post-Mutiny era—an attitude that marked a complete negation of the ideas and ideals that had animated their not very remote predecessors. Besides, in the prevailing disposition of the world, no single European power in possession of colonies, could take the lead in practising the virtue of self-abnegation. If France, Holland and other holding powers prided upon their overseas greatness and glory, why should England, the greatest of them all, undertake to dismantle her possessions?[48] The issue of terminating British rule in India was part of the problem of ending the colonial system, with its world-wide ramifications.

England, therefore, made her plans in India more to insure her permanence in the country than to hasten the day of her withdrawal. She withheld from the Indian people all opportunities to train themselves for the defence of their own hearths and homes and endeavoured to weaken in every possible way their capacity for concerted action. Minto's introduction of communal representation was not a freak decision but it claimed the magnitude of a well-calculated move to widen the differences between the Indian communities into an irreconcilable discord. If the intention had been otherwise, its scope would never have been extended from time to time even after its evil effects on the national unity had become so obvious.

But such devices failed to serve the end of their authors. Liberation was in fact implicit in the very nature of the British rule. The unification of the country by means of a single administration and by quick modes of travel and communication and the introduction of an educational system, with its bias towards western knowledge and learn-

[48]Even to-day the possessive instinct among some of the imperialist countries is very great Although France withdrew from her Indian settlements of Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Karaikal, Yanam and Mahe many years ago, Portugal has not chosen to follow her excellent example The Portuguese territories on Indian soil, consisting of Goa, Daman and Diu, are negligible from every point of view, but the Lisbon Government has been advancing the most fantastic arguments in defence of its determination to cling to them. These foreign enclaves, however, owe their continued existence entirely to India's forbearance and pacific policy.

ing, besides helping the country to emerge from the trammels of mediaevialism, created a new class of men who became the harbingers of Indian nationalism. India began not only to love and admire western arts and sciences but also to appreciate the value of freedom and democracy. At the same time, she learnt the language of opposition and defiance, so eloquently preached by masters like Burke, Bentham, Fox, Sheridan and Tom Paine against tyranny and imperialism and eventually put it into action to compel compliance with her own political aspirations. With all its faults and shortcomings, British rule became the best cradle in which Indian nationalism grew and ultimately became irresistible. This is precisely the reason why, although England has withdrawn from this country, the links between the two promise to become so enduring. India's system of administration, her laws and regulations, her educational system and, above all, her admiration for and adherence to democratic principles are a legacy from the British which will ensure an abiding and fruitful Indo-British relationship. The many empires that flourished in India had their periods of glory and eventually faded into history but because of its unique contribution, Britain's connection with this country, though it has ended politically, will remain as long as the ideas and ideals shared by the two countries survive.

It would, however, have been most graceful on England's part if she had of her own volition and in good time replaced her political dominion over India with friendship. But such an intention was never too strong in the minds of her rulers. Only the compulsion of Indian nationalism and of the international community, rendered irresistible by the destructive second World War, that eventually forced their hands, although the advent of Labour to power in 1945 certainly hastened the process of British withdrawal. Sir Stafford Cripps stated this point frankly in the House of Commons during the debate on Attlee's historic pronouncement about the transfer of power. Cripps declared that it was quite obviously impossible for Britain to continue her responsibility in India indefinitely "into a period when

we had not the power to carry it out". General Sir Francis Tuker stated the military point of view when he said: 'Ultimately we found that this garrison commitment was more than the industrial needs of our impoverished country could stand. That was one very strong reason for our leaving India and leaving it quickly.' The hands of the Labour Government were undoubtedly strengthened by the existence in England of a section of opinion which had long nourished what Professor Brecher calls a 'guilt complex' on the Indian question, but even Churchill and his party could not have held this country much longer. 'There can be little doubt', says the Professor, 'that the transfer of power could not have been postponed much longer, even had the Conservatives been returned to office in 1945.' He discounts the doctrine of British generosity by declaring: 'Only a realisation that power could not be retained except at an excessive cost ensured the outcome of 1947.'[49]

Nevertheless, the willingness and enthusiasm shown by Mountbatten to end the British rule brought to a close all quarrels and controversies between India and England. Indeed, the Indian leaders soon discovered a natural affinity between themselves and Lord and Lady Mountbatten whose persuasive enthusiasm and championship of all noble causes won the hearts of the Indian people as the doings of no other foreigner had done before. India has ceased to regard the Mountbattens as aliens and remembers their unreserved participation in her joys and sorrows during the momentous years 1947 and 1948 with deep gratitude. Perhaps, there cannot be a more sincere and juster tribute to Lord and Lady Mountbatten[50] than that paid by India's Prime Minister at the time of their departure from this country. Speaking at the farewell banquet on June 20, 1948, Nehru said: 'Fifteen months have passed and these fifteen months seem a long time, and yet it seems but yesterday that Lord and Lady Mountbatten and Pamela

[49]Brecher Michael, *NEHRU: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY*, Oxford University Press, 1959, pp 372, 373

[50]The sudden and premature death of Lady Mountbatten in February 1960 was deeply mourned in India.

Mountbatten came here........' Addressing the outgoing statesman, he said: 'You came here, Sir, with a high reputation, but many a reputation has foundered in India. You lived here during a period of great difficulty and crisis, and yet your reputation has not foundered. That is a remarkable feat.' India, declared Nehru, could offer the Mountbattens nothing more real or precious than the love and affection of her people. Such is also the sentiment that pervades the relations between this country and England.

INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

A BRIEF review of India's achievements since independence would provide an appropriate conclusion to the story of British rule in this country. During the first few years of her freedom, India was overwhelmed with problems that threatened to destroy the very basis of her existence. Both in extent and intensity, the partition was, as we saw, as disastrous and devastating as convulsions of nature, involving the lives and fortunes of millions of people. The division bred suspicion and animosity between the Dominions of India and Pakistan, which were reflected in their disputes concerning Kashmir, the sharing of the river waters, the restoration of evacuee property and of abducted women and children, and the final settlement of the boundaries.[1] Internally, India's distractions were no less serious. The prophets of gloom had confidently predicted that the components of a divided India would fall apart soon after British departure, pushing the country into the abyss of chaos. With the secession of large and fertile regions, which had formed the backbone of undivided India's agricultural economy, the task of feeding the population and of resettling the millions of displaced persons that poured into the country assumed gigantic proportions. The foundations of the administration, both civil and military, were gravely undermined by large-scale defections and transfers to the other Dominion. Many princes were determined to exploit the situation to their own sordid advantage by proclaiming their alleged independent status. To add to her distractions, India was deprived of the matchless moral force of Mahatma Gandhi by his assassination in less than six months after the attainment of independence.

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[1]A large number of boundary disputes between India and Pakistan have now been happily settled, while the equally intractable problem relating to the division of waters from the rivers of the Indus basin has also been solved to their mutual satisfaction

Nevertheless, the people of India triumphed over their tribulations by exercising patience, prudence and patriotism. The leadership furnished by Nehru and Sardar Patel, despite their somewhat divergent ideals and outlook, was admirably suited to meet the challenge of the time. With the aid of his superb realism, the Sardar achieved the miracle of contriving a bloodless revolution in the states by drawing them into the country's wider unity, and stabilized the bases of the Government through a comprehensive re-organisation of the administrative services. The Indian Administrative Service was formed to take the place of the old Indian Civil Service, while the morale of the police force was greatly strengthened by the Sardar's categorical assurance to its members that they could confidently count upon his steadfast support and approbation in the discharge of their functions. The historian will undoubtedly accord a distinguished place to Sardar Patel when recording the story of India's consolidation besides expressing regret that power came to this great man, not when he was in the full tide of his manhood, but, as the great Muslim ruler Sher Shah exclaimed about himself, at the time of the evening prayer. The death of Patel in December 1950, though perhaps inevitable at his age, was nevertheless a great national misfortune, especially since the burden of piloting the affairs of a vast and distracted country fell on the unaided shoulders of Nehru. Perhaps few Prime Ministers in the world have borne so long and with such vigour and wisdom the heavy cares and responsibilities of office as Nehru has done. Apart from his outstanding contribution to the country's political stability and economic growth, he is, as a distinguished foreign observer has rightly remarked, primarily responsible for making India a secular state [2]

Free India's two-fold goal is to insure the permanence of a wise, efficient and democratic government and to hasten the redemption of its people from poverty. The Constitution framed towards this end was enacted on November 26, 1949 and inaugurated on January 26, 1950, which

[2]Bowles, Chester, *AMBASSADOR'S REPORT*, Harper, 1954, p.104.

has become a significant date in Indian history. The Constitution of India is not a spartan statute, but neither the profusion nor the complexity of its provisions detracts from its essentially democratic and progressive character. Besides providing for the peculiar needs of the country, it bears the imprint of the experience of other democracies. The Indian constitution-makers, most of whom were men of outstanding legal abilities, did not disdain to draw copiously from the constitutional instruments of countries like Britain, the United States, Ireland, Canada and Australia which furnish the best examples of both unitary and federal forms of government. India's need lay, as it does and will lie for some considerable time to come, in the existence of a form of government that would be federal in its broad features but unitary in all its essentials to safeguard her political unity and to promote her economic growth. In fulfilling this paramount need, the framers of the Constitution have drawn up an instrument which may truly be described as *sui generis* since it does not conform to any of the accepted definitions of federal or unitary forms of government.

The Constitution of 1950 is a comprehensive document which sets forth the details of both the union and the provincial, now called states, governments. It declares India a Republic, although by special arrangement, which has since been liberally used by many of the newly-liberated countries of the British Empire, she has remained a member of the Commonwealth India is not a Dominion, since she does not owe allegiance even nominally or symbolically to the Crown of England, but by a choice made in 1949 she has associated herself actively with the Commonwealth countries, thus giving a new shape and significance to this unique partnership of free nations.[3] The Funda-

[3]While Pakistan and Ceylon opted for the membership of the Commonwealth, Burma chose to remain outside Commenting on the Burmese decision, Dr. Sir Ivor Jennings says that it was a hurried and not a happy decision, which ought to have been postponed till 1949 'when the nature of the post-war Commonwealth had been determined by the experience of India, Pakistan and Ceylon'. (*Problems of New Commonwealth*, 1958, pp. 4, 5.)

mental Rights, to which a whole chapter has been devoted in the Constitution, guarantee not only the liberty of the individual, but also the dignity of man, while the Directive Principles of State Policy, no less detailed in their enumeration, promise a fair and generous deal to every citizen of the Republic, irrespective of his caste, creed or colour. Social justice, opportunities for employment and education, and preferential treatment for certain backward sections of the community are promised. Separate representation, the bane of Indian political life in the pre-independence period, finds no place in the Constitution which, however, safeguards the interests of the communities like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the Anglo-Indians by means of reserved seats for their members in the national legislatures. For the first time in the country's history, the common man has been armed with effective political power by the introduction of adult franchise. Like the citizenship of the country, which makes no distinction between one man and another in the exercise of the rights and privileges accruing from that status, the right to vote is shared equally by the humble and the lowly with the highest dignitary of the state. In free India the power of the ballot-box is thus real and enormous. Notwithstanding the grim forebodings of some the experience of two general elections since the promulgation of the Constitution has shown that illiteracy is no bar to an intelligent and disciplined exercise of the vote by the common man.

At the time of the inauguration of the Constitution, the territories of the Union were demarcated into Part A, Part B and Part C states, but their number was drastically reduced later, with the formation of the Andhra state in October 1953 and the adoption of the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, 1955, for the redrawing of the administrative map of India, largely on a linguistic basis. To-day the Indian Union consists of fourteen states and seven units, the latter being administered under the direct orders of the Central Government. In May 1960, one more state came into existence, following

the bifurcation of the composite state of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat. Some people have doubted the wisdom of forming administrative regions purely from considerations of linguistic affinity, their objections being based on the apprehension that such governments are apt to stimulate provincial patriotism to the detriment of national solidarity. Whatever might be the validity of this point of view, the creation of linguistic states, if it was unavoidable, ought to have been undertaken soon after independence and not when the country was making all-out efforts to promote its economic development. The controversies that accompany the demarcation of states' boundaries are hardly conducive to the concentration of national efforts on the attainment of a higher standard of living.[4]

The Constitution provides for a powerfully unified federal structure. We have at the Centre a Parliament with two chambers, an executive controlled by a Cabinet of Ministers and a Supreme Court which is the paramount judicial authority in the country. The Parliament is the supreme legislative organ and enjoys unrivalled prestige and power in the country. The establishment of a bicameral legislature at the Centre is in conformity with the

[4]The student of affairs cannot fail to be struck by the curious dualism that dominates India's national life. The national movement and independence have greatly strengthened the patriotism and the sentimental attachment of the people to their motherland, but this feeling has not relaxed the hold which local loyalties exercise over their minds. With the aid of modern science and technology, India seeks to move into the atomic age, but she is at the same time loth to surrender some aspects of the economy, the roots of which are many hundred years old. India is a secular state, but no governmental ceremony of note takes place without invoking the benedictions of the Almighty through rites that date back to some millenniums. Mahatma Gandhi, the prince of simplicity, peace and non-violence, was cremated with full military honours. These seeming contradictions in the national behaviour should be attributed to the country's impatience to move forward in the modern world without abandoning the good and great things which the past has yielded. There seems to be a widespread belief that a synthesis between a placid past and a present and future dominated by feverish activity is not only desirable but possible. The future alone can tell to what extent such a combination is practicable.

practice of most of the major states in the world and with that of the self-governing members of the Commonwealth. The powers of legislation granted to the House of the People and the Council of States, which are now called the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha respectively, are almost similar except that all Money Bills are to be introduced only in the Lok Sabha which is the Lower House. The members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the voter of the States, while those of the Rajya Sabha are the representatives of the States. Twelve members of this House are nominated by the President of the Union so that men of talent, who may not choose to court the electorate, may find their place in Parliament and thus give the nation the benefit of their wisdom and experience. The Upper House is not subject to dissolution, but as many as one-third of its members are required to retire on the expiration of every second year. The duration of the Lok Sabha is five years, although its life may be extended for one year in a period of emergency.

Taking into account the vastness of the country and the variety of its population, the constitution-makers have clothed Parliament with ample powers so that in normal times the Constitution functions as a federation, the states enjoying their domestic autonomy to the extent prescribed by the statute, but assumes a unitary character in times of stress and strain. Even otherwise the preponderance of the Central legislature and the Central executive is well established. First, the Parliament has exclusive power to make laws on a large number of important subjects enumerated in the 'Union List' in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. To mention some of the more important ones: Defence, Foreign Affairs, War and Peace, Citizenship, Extradition, Railways, Highways, Shipping, Airways, Posts and Telegraphs, Currency, Foreign loans, Trade and Commerce, Banking, Insurance, Census, the Survey of India, Union Public Services, Taxes on Income, Excise Duties, Constitution and Organisation of High Courts. In addition, it shares with the State Governments the right of legislating for their territories on a

wide variety of subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List of the same Schedule. Again, in the event of a State law being repugnant to a Union law, the latter prevails, unless the President ordains otherwise. In India, unlike in some other countries, such, for example, as America, the residuary powers are exercised by the principal government and not by the regional authorities.

Secondly, under a proclamation of emergency, or on a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the Council of States, the Union Parliament is entitled to what a writer expressively says 'invade' the State List.[5] The supremacy of the Central Legislature *vis a vis* the State Governments is clearly enunciated in Article 256 which reads: 'The executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose.' The next article is equally categorical since it lays down that 'the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive power of the Union.'

Thirdly, the Constitution reserves to the Centre the right of intervention in the event of the failure of the constitutional machinery in the States or when the financial stability of India or any part of it is threatened. The President of the Union is empowered to act with a view to remedying such a situation on receipt of a report from the Governor of the State concerned. There have been many instances since the inauguration of the Constitution when the governments of several States have been replaced by the President's rule. The Punjab, the now defunct P.E.P.-S.U. (Patiala and Eastern Punjab States Union), Andhra and Travancore-Cochin, now called Kerala, were all apprenticed to direct rule from Delhi for varying periods. In 1958, the Communist Government in Kerala was

[5]Morris-Jones, W. H., *PARLIAMENT IN INDIA,* Longmans, p 4

directed to hold mid-term elections, following a widespread agitation against some of its measures in the State.

Fourthly, no State, with its limited resources, can expect to undertake large-scale development schemes without generous financial aid from the Centre. Since independence, India has launched a series of five-year plans, designed to promote the material prosperity of her people. As we shall see presently, enormous sums of money are required for this purpose and no State can expect to be a beneficiary of the Centre's bounties unless it heartily subscribes to the Union Government's policies and programmes.

Lastly, the States are not indestructible entities in the sense that their size and boundaries cannot be altered. Following the integration of the former princely states and the creation of linguistic provinces, the constituent regions of the union have undergone radical changes twice in a little over a decade. Administrative necessity or convenience may call for similar reorganisation at a later date, thus emphasising the fact that there is no permanence in the existing set up of the regions controlled by the State Governments. In contrast, the structure of the Centre is far more enduring, as indeed it should be.

The pattern of the States' constitution is derived largely from the Government of India Act of 1935 — a fact which should not lead one to the conclusion that the nationalist opposition to the older statute was misplaced. To-day the provisions of the Act of 1935 in their application to the States are acceptable because most of its objectionable features have been eliminated. Article 157 lays down that 'no person shall be eligible for appointment as Governor unless he is a citizen of India.' He cannot, therefore, function as an autocrat and hold himself responsible, not to the people of the country, but to some distant and foreign authority. It is true that, as in the earlier Act, he is armed with extensive personal powers, but he cannot exercise them by ignoring popular disapproval and his Ministers' protest. Nor can he expect the Centre to countenance his arbitrary behaviour. The Constitution has now been tried for a decade and no instances of Governors falling out with

their Ministers on major issues of policy have been reported. Convention has fortified the constitutional position of the Governor, who can exercise his special powers, without inviting opprobrium, only in periods of emergency and crisis after securing the Centre's approval. The autonomy granted to the States is real and ample to enable their governments to take effective measures for the well-being and progress of their people. The State List, enumerating the subjects falling within their jurisdiction, is comprehensive and includes public health and sanitation, education, agriculture, forests, fisheries, land revenue, taxes on agricultural income, taxes on lands and buildings and many other levies yielding substantial revenues.

Despite its complexity, the Indian Constitution is essentially a progressive document and generally conforms to Dicey's definition of a federal state, that is, "a political contrivance intended to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of 'State rights'" It differs rather widely from the American concept of association based on the division of powers between distinct and co-ordinate governments Dr. Jennings, who is rather critical as much on account of its length and abounding provisions as on account of its 'omissions,'[6] concedes that the Indian constitional machine is capable of effective operation.[7] Dr. Ambedkar, who piloted the Constitution Bill through the Constituent Assembly, expressed his confidence that it was 'strong enough to hold the country together both in peace-time and wartime.' The Constitution is the fundamental law of the country and, as in the United States and elsewhere, a certain amount of reverence must be developed towards it as a safeguard against its being dismissed as a mere compilation of ordinary law. While it would be wrong to look upon it as the Laws of the Medes,

[6]For instance, he says that the Constitution 'ignores the communal problem except for the few temporary provisions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Anglo-Indians'. He further complains that the delimitation of constituencies should not have been assigned to ordinary legislation, but should have been embodied in the Constitution itself.

[7]Jennings, Sir Ivor, *SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*, Oxford University Press, 1953, p 86

frequent amendments deprive it of the sanctity to which it is entitled as an instrument providing for the stability and progress of the country. Since its adoption in 1950, it has been subjected to nine amendments, not all of which have gained popular approval. The Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1955, in particular has evoked protest, especially from the business community since it involves the right of the citizen to seek judicial review in the matter of compensation when his property is acquired or requisitioned by the State. Commenting on the amendment, Patanjali Sastri, retired Chief Justice of India, said: 'The constitutional protection of private property consists not in any prohibition of appropriation of private property, but in the insistence on the payment of adequate compensation.' He complained that if the quantum of compensation was to be determined by the State and not in a court of law, there would then be little protection for private property, especially at the hands of legislators with extremist economic notions. No situation has, however, so far arisen for giving practical proofs about the validity of this complaint.

India's need to-day is not a radically altered or new constitution, since the present one is excellent in almost every respect, but a good party system capable of furnishing an opposition both willing and competent to take over the responsibilities of government from the present party in power. In two frankly written articles, published in October 1959, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, Mehr Chand Mahajan, complained that the various political ills the country was presently suffering from were essentially due, in his opinion, to the federal form of government and urged that the problem of clean and efficient administration could be best solved by adopting a unitary constitution. 'I strongly feel,' he wrote, 'that India should have only one law-making body, Parliament, and it alone should be responsible for the administration of Bharat with a Central Cabinet.' The preceding paragraphs, it is hoped, have made it pretty clear that the provisions of the Constitution of 1950 are

adequate enough to ensure the ascendancy of the Centre over the State Governments and taking into consideration the size of the country and the diverse requirements of the national life, it is doubtful whether it is prudent or even practicable to administer the entire country through the agency of a *single authority*. Many of the constituent units of the Indian Union are as big as or even bigger than most of the European countries and attempts to control them by reducing their administrations to the level of local bodies is not likely to win wide approval. Besides, concentration of excessive power in a single authority, no matter in what form it is constituted, is apt to give rise to new political problems and dangers.

We have in India what is called 'one-party democracy' since 1947. The Congress, by virtue of its past record of service and sacrifice and its esteemed leaders, has held unchallenged dominion not only over the government of the country, but also over many aspects of national life. The need for such an integrated organisation capable of effective political action on a nation-wide scale was paramount for many years after independence to promote stability in the government of the country and to encourage a sense of security and confidence among the people. Moreover, only a party sure of popular support could undertake gigantic projects of economic development involving the expenditure of considerable sums of money. The value of Congress Governments for the realisation of these essential political and economic goals cannot be gainsaid.

Nevertheless, even the most ardently enthusiastic and patriotic organisation cannot retain its pristine vigour or idealism after enjoying the power and the sweets and delights of office for more than a decade. The Congress today is neither a united nor an inspiring body as of old and its continued enjoyment of power is not an attribute of its inner strength, but a painful reminder of the feeble and fragmented state of the parties ranged against it. The results of the general elections of 1951 and 1957 bear out that, although the Congress has been steadily weakening,

the distance that separates it from the opposing parties is still considerable. In the elections of 1951, the Congress secured 4.35 crores or 42 15 per cent. of the votes polled for the seats in the States legislatures as against 5.46 crores or 44.92 per cent. in 1957. The corresponding record of the other parties was: Praja Socialist Party: 1 53 crores or 14.85 per cent. in 1951 and 1.17 crores or 9.63 per cent in 1957; Communists. 45 lakhs or 4.40 per cent. in 1951 and 1.28 crores or 10.52 per cent. in 1957. In 1951 the Congress secured 4.74 crores or 45 per cent. of the votes polled for the Lok Sabha or the Lower House of Parliament and did better in the following elections, the figures being 5.66 crores or 47 per cent. The achievements of the other parties were: P.S.P. 1.73 crores or 16.4 per cent. in 1951 and 1.26 crores or 10.5 per cent. in 1957; Communists: 53 lakhs or 5 per cent. in 1951 and 1.20 crores or 10 per cent. in 1957. These figures, though certainly illustrative of the relative strength of the major parties in the country, do not, however, disclose the entire picture. An analysis of the last election results in the States reveals that the party in power has lost ground in a number of them. Its reverses were noteworthy in Kerala, Bombay, Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and in the hill districts of Assam. Failure to placate Maharashtrian and Gujarati sentiment by conceding in time the demand for two separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat on a linguistic basis resulted in the heavy defeat of the Congress in those regions of the Bombay State, while in Kerala the Communists became the beneficiaries of the squabbles among the rival parties who failed to combine, despite their common detestation of the adherents of Marx. Further, as an Indian commentator observes in his analysis of the election results, "the selective defeat of individual party 'bosses' in certain otherwise continuing Congress States is also a portent that cannot be ignored insofar as it indicates a limit to the tolerance of the electorate"[8] It is most unlikely that the next elections will produce radically different results, and the prospects

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[8]Verghese, B. G., *THE ELECTIONS AND AFTER,* (Series of articles published in The Times of India, Bombay, in May 1957).

of the Congress being returned to power at the Centre and in most of the States remain bright. The dislodgment of the Communist Party from the Ministry in Kerala by its defeat at the polls last year lends support to this assessment of the shape of things to come, although the Congress was forced to seek the alliance of the Praja-Socialist Party and the avowedly communal Muslim League to gain this end. Despite their defeat, the Communists in Kerala have emerged from the mid-term elections as the single largest party in the State.

The future democratic set up of India and the fate of the Congress will, therefore, largely depend on how the party system will develop in the country in the coming years. There is indeed no hard and fast rule that the organisations opposed to the party in power should hold fundamentally different views from those held by it on social and economic problems. In the United States, the 'doctrinal disunion' between the opposing political parties is only nominal. Commenting on the points of similarity between the ideals of the Democratic Party and those of the Republican Party, Professor Brogan says: 'In the American system, the right of the Democratic party does not overlap the left, but the right of the Republican party The Radicals of the Republican party are as radical as the radicals of the Democrats, the conservative as conservative'[9] The position in Canada, to give one more illustration, is similar. It is not obvious what separates the Conservatives from the Liberals in that country. 'The Liberals and Conservatives from Quebec,' says Prof. Wheare, 'have more in common than the Liberals of Quebec and Manitoba,'[10] and yet the party system has worked with admirable efficiency in that country.

In India no strenuous attempts have been made to build up a party capable of achieving the two-fold goal of stepping into the shoes of the Congress in the event of the latter vacating its position and of reconciling economic

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[9]Brogan, D. W, *GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE*· A study in the American Political System, Harper, 1943, p 38

[10]Wheare, K. C., *FEDERAL GOVERNMENT*, Oxford University Press, 1946, p 87

development with political democracy. The country has opted for a system of government deriving its strength and sanctions from parliamentary institutions. No one who is convinced about the essential soundness of this system can countenance the assumption of power by the Communists unless they too affirm their faith in parliamentary democracy which they cannot do without repudiating the basic tenets of their own political religion. It was strongly believed for some time that the Praja-Socialist Party, whose senior leaders were staunch Congressmen before their secession would supply the country's serious political deficiency by growing into a powerful and country-wide organisation and by offering an effective challenge to Congress supremacy. But all such expectations have now been belied and the hope that the other parties would rise to the occasion is even more remote.

Meanwhile, another political party, known as the Swatantra Party, has come into existence. Since its establishment in 1959, it has attracted a good deal of attention and derives its prestige and influence largely from its founder, the veteran and highly esteemed leader, C. Rajagopalachari. This hero of many non-violent battles with the former British rulers of India, the country's last Governor-General, a man of keen political perception and sound judgment, and an ardent patriot, has declared in the most explicit terms that the main object of the new party is to oppose the Congress. Speaking at the party's Convention in August 1959, he roundly accused the Congress he had served so long and with such devotion, of going to extremes in its economic policies. In its twenty-one point manifesto, the Swatantra Party affirms its faith in 'social justice and equality of opportunity for all,' but expresses its opposition to 'the increasing State interference of the kind now being pursued.' The mettle of the new organisation has still to be tested at the hustings, but whether or not it bids fair to develop eventually into a powerful opposition party, its advent will have served a useful purpose if

it succeeds in scaring the Congress and putting it on its guard.[11]

The temptation to attack the Congress merely because it has sat too long in the seats of power should, however, be resisted While the need for a sound party system cannot be gainsaid, it has become possible for the country to undertake far-reaching economic programmes precisely because it has enjoyed an uninterrupted spell of stable government, thanks to the supply of the political ballast by the Congress. For the first time in India's history, the triple curse of hunger, disease and ignorance is being grappled with on a planned basis. Discussing the problem of economic development, the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) explains that the 'central objective' of planning in this country at the present stage is 'to initiate a process of development which will raise living standards and open out to the people new opportunities for a richer and more varied life'.[12] It is proposed to achieve this end, not by sanctioning reprisals against the monied classes, but by means of democratic planning. India's planners have, therefore, chosen to promote the country's material progress through the combined labours of both State and private enterprise.

It is true that, following the decision of Parliament in December 1954, the Government has accepted the 'socialist pattern of society' as the basis of the country's economic and industrial policy,[13] but India's approach to socialism has been consistently pragmatic and flexible. Some over-zealous partymen, including a few Ministers of Government, have occasionally indulged in sabre-rattling against the private sector, but the basic policy of both the Congress and the Government has remained steadfast in favour of

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[11] *Party Politics in India* by Myron Weiner (1957) gives a comprehensive account of the rise and the present position of the various political parties in India.

[12] *THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN*, issued by the Planning Commission, Government of India, p.7.

[13] *THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN*, 1956-61, issued by the Planning Commission, Government of India, p 44

mixed economy.'[14] 'There is,' says a foreign commentator on India's Second Five-Year Plan, 'no overthrowing of old values in the plan, for it is held that the country must develop according to its own traditions and genius'. Quite obviously a system of planning that envisages vital assignments to private business cannot be Marxian in its content. The Government of India and indeed all forward-looking economic thinkers, who have not allowed themselves to be lost in the labyrinthine dialectics of Marxism, are convinced that the State is not the only competent agency for promoting the prosperity of a country. The fact, says C. A. R. Crosland in his widely-read book, *The Future of Socialism,* that governments now exercise pervasive economic power and that 'they do so from motives other than a desire to prop up private business, would be sufficient by itself to outmode most pre-war, semi-Marxist analyses of class power.'[15] This point of view finds ample confirmation in the Indian Government's industrial policy statement of April 30, 1956 which, besides prescribing the spheres of enterprise for the private sector, emphasizes that the activities of this sector should be so organised as to 'fit into the framework of the social and economic policy of the State'. Subject to these stipulations, private enterprise is allowed complete latitude to develop according to its own resources, experience and ability.

The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) was modest in its goal and did not seek to accomplish much. Its primary aim was to help the national economy to recover from the deep wounds inflicted on it by war and partition. It also sought to lay in the country the foundations of a modern industrial economy so that new assets could be built up during the subsequent plan periods at a greater speed and on a truly impressive scale. The Plan was successful in achieving most of its objectives as much on account of the

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[14]The realisation that the Government alone cannot accomplish everything has induced a greater sense of responsibility even among the advocates of radical economic planning.

[15]Crosland, C A. R., *THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM,* Jonathan Cape, 1956, p.29.

feasibility of its aims as due to the exceptionally favourable monsoon which contributed to an appreciable increase in the agricultural output. The success of their first endeavour emboldened the planners to envisage subsequent development on a much bigger scale—an ambition that is fully reflected in the investment and production targets laid down in the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61).

Briefly, the Second Plan aimed at the attainment of a 25 per cent. increase in the national income compared with 18 per cent. in the First Plan. After providing for a 7 per cent. rise in the population, it expected that the *per capita* increase in the national income would be about 18 per cent. Its other major goals were: rapid industrialisation with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries; a large expansion of employment opportunities, and reduction of inequalities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power. It was decided to invest Rs. 4,800 crores in the public sector during the five-year period in order to realise the various targets described in the Plan, but the allocations under different heads were subsequently revised, following the increase in the cost of the projects, without scaling down the total outlay. The Plan was variously criticized, the most familiar attack being that it was over-ambitious compared to the country's available resources. Commenting on the scope of the Plan on January 5, 1957, the London *Economist* wrote: 'First impressions abide; the plan is over-ambitious and imperfectly balanced; the planners, for all their technical skill, have a self-confidence that is disturbing. Yet these impressions must be tempered by compassion towards a people whose average income last year was about £20 a head. To lift that figure to about £40 in the next twenty years does not seem an outrageous target; to fail could mean disaster for India, Asia—and the world'

India's economy has undoubtedly responded to the stimuli provided by the various development schemes that have been introduced since the beginning of the first Plan. The

addition to the national assets in the shape of new dams, power and irrigation projects, steel plants and engineering works, has certainly been most beneficial to the country's progress, but such productive activity, while it is certainly a great tribute to the public-spirited enterprise of both the State and the private sector, has not been on a scale sufficient to affect the level of living of a rapidly rising population. 'Improvident maternity,' to borrow the expressive phrase of the Census Commissioner, will render any economic gains illusory unless it is effectively dealt with before it assumes unmanageable dimensions. Similarly, the much-prized goal of self-sufficiency in food has persistently eluded the planners and the sharp upward trend in the wholesale prices since the beginning of the second Plan, is mainly the consequence of a shortfall in agricultural production. Without an appreciable expansion of the agricultural economy, upon which 70 per cent. of the population lives, any marked rise in the demand for the products of industry must remain illusory. Fluctuations in industrial growth are not peculiar to this country alone but their sharpness is noteworthy from the following table: 1952 3.6 per cent; 1953 1.9 per cent.; 1954 6.9 per cent.; 1955 8.4 per cent.; 1956 8.3 per cent.; 1957 3.5 per cent.; 1958 1.7 per cent., 1959 8.1 per cent. and 1960 12.2 per cent. These figures, showing the rate of growth over that of each previous year, relate to development both in the public and private sectors.

It is against this general economic background that the details of the Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) have been formulated. The Government believes that only by doubling the size of the second plan will it be possible to make an effective contribution to an increase in the people's

standard of living.[16] It is, however, evident that far greater emphasis will have to be laid on agricultural production. It is equally certain that, although in the ultimate analysis the people of the country are themselves the architects of their own fortune, substantial foreign aid is indispensable to bring the various costly development schemes to fruition: India has ceased to be allergic to foreign help and foreign investment and the flow of external capital into the country in an ever-increasing volume will be vitally necessary in the coming years. The United States has been most generous in lending a helping hand to India and many other friendly countries, including Britain and Russia, have readily come to her aid in her strenuous efforts to redeem her people from the nightmare of poverty and suffering. The cause of democracy will receive a new accession of strength if the great Indian experiment of promoting the prosperity of a vast under-developed country without recourse to physical controls and compulsions succeeds 'We are now,' says the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, H. V. R Iengar, 'at a stage when with sustained effort over the next

[16] The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66), the draft outline of which was published in July 1960, was finalised in the first week of August 1961. The Plan envisages an outlay of Rs. 11,600 crores, the share of the private sector being Rs 4,100 crores. The planners claim to have devoted adequate attention to the development of the agricultural economy and have provided for an expenditure of Rs 3,622 crores on irrigation and power projects and on the general improvement of agriculture, including community development projects A substantial expansion of the industrial sector is also provided for and towards this end as much as Rs. 3,209 crores is proposed to be spent during the next five years. Friendly countries, which have come together to assist India, have promised financial aid totalling Rs 1,100 crores during the first two years of the plan. The third plan has, therefore, been ushered in under favourable auspices It is anticipated that the *per capita* income, which was Rs 318 in 1959-60 at current prices, will rise to Rs 450 by the end of the plan period. Competent observers anticipate that the Indian economy will reach what is now widely called the 'take-off' stage within the next five years, meaning thereby that it will become self-supporting.

few years, we can successfully break out of the shackles of a predominantly agricultural economy and put ourselves on the high road to modern industrial progress.'[17]

India has thus a great vested interest in peace, not only within her own borders, but all over the world, since a global conflict will undoubtedly frustrate her ambitious and urgent economic plans. It is her overriding domestic needs that have strongly influenced her foreign policy. The doctrine of *Panchshila* is a simple variant of the time-honoured plea for good neighbourliness and universal friendship. The Indian Prime Minister and all who subscribe to his pacific policies and convictions are deeply distressed and indignant at the Chinese incursions across the Indian borders as much on account of their aggressiveness as on account of the cynical breach of the doctrine, of which Peking has become guilty, despite its repeated affirmation of faith in the sovereign virtue of *Panchshila*. 'The preservation of peace,' the Prime Minister told the American people in a radio and television broadcast in December 1956, 'forms the central aim of India's policy. It is in the pursuit of this policy that we have chosen the path of non-alignment in any military or like pact or alliance. Non-alignment does not mean passivity of mind or action, lack of faith or conviction....It is a positive and dynamic approach to such problems that confront us.' In other words, India's foreign policy envisages her marching forward hand in hand with the rest of the world in the common quest for peace, progress and prosperity and staying

[17]The provision of trained technical and administrative personnel in required numbers to control and guide a developing economy presents a serious problem. Many experts have offered their suggestions for solving this problem and for improving the standard of administrative efficiency. The reports of A. D. Gorwala, a retired Indian Civilian. and Paul H. Appleby's report call for special mention.

back, if in her view, the purpose of an alliance is to weaken the efforts to promote international good-will and world unity. Who can cavil at her desperate anxiety to maintain domestic peace and to strive for international tranquillity when her prospects as a potentially great and prosperous nation depend so much on the issues of war and peace?

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